

— THE BIBLE'S —
DIFFICULT
SCRIPTURES
— EXPLAINED! —

by David C. Pack

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Printed in the United States of America

Many study the Bible—but stumble over difficult verses, leaving them confused and without proper understanding. They are then led to accept twisted, distorted and outright false explanations of what should be God's PLAIN MEANING from Scripture. But this need not be—you can understand God's Word!

Here are the Bible's difficult scriptures explained!

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Foreword

How this book came to exist involves some interesting history, inspiring to me, and worth hearing before studying its contents.

Also included is an extensive Introduction that follows explaining *how* to study the Bible, and exactly what Bible study *is*—what one is *actually doing* when he opens and reads the Word of God. This special Introduction must be carefully read in its entirety, even studied, before continuing so that the reader is prepared for and can really benefit from the scriptural explanations that follow.

In late 1977, after I had been in Christ's ministry for some years, my father asked if I would write an explanation of all the Bible's difficult scriptures for him. Of course, this was a daunting task, and I realized that he had no idea what he was asking. Recognizing that it would take a staggering number of hours to complete the task properly, I put it off for awhile. But he persisted, and I finally decided to take on the task. The original project was completed just in time to present him as a Father's Day gift in 1978. I did not even have enough time to proofread it once before giving it to him, so it was very raw and sometimes unclear or even technically incorrect. They were certainly incomplete. (I still have the original typed pages, containing 137 scriptural explanations.)

My father died in the faith in 1995—and I inherited his extra-wide-margin Bible. I sat down to page through it and found that he

had shrunk and pasted all of my (less than complete) explanations into the margin beside the passages to which they pertained. I could only imagine the even greater number of hours that my father had spent doing this, while benefiting from what I had written. I am sure you can imagine what a treasure his Bible has become to me!

In a way, this longer book is dedicated to my father, who was an extraordinarily diligent Bible student until the day of his death. Some day, I will tell him what became of his present and thank him for requesting it because this is why you are able to read it now. May this material inspire and help you with the precious and marvelous truth of God as much as it did him.

Through the years, the first primitive version of the paper that I gave my father became a tool for elders, deacons, sermonette men and other leaders in each of my pastorates. Many found it extremely helpful in their personal Bible study and in speaking before the Church.

Another small part of the book's history is that, in late 1999, a man "appropriated" my original work, claimed it as his own, verbatim, and put it on his website. This original version may still be "floating" somewhere on the Internet.

In May 1999, I was led to establish The Restored Church of God. I soon realized the need to create an extensive Leadership Development Program (LDP) for our ministers, elders, deacons and various others. By late 2000, I had significantly improved the original text given to my father and, by early 2001, sent it to all who were part of our LDP. It first became a booklet available to the public in the summer of 2002.

Special Training

This volume now contains a comprehensive list of virtually all of the Bible's most difficult scriptures. The correct explanation of their meaning was taught to me primarily during my years as a student at Ambassador College (from 1967-1971) in Pasadena, California, one of three colleges sponsored by the Worldwide Church of God (in which I spent 22 years in the ministry). Understanding their meaning was part of the curriculum. Students were expected to be able to explain them to any who would ask their true meaning. Some understanding of these explanations was refined later, through additional teaching of the Church as it grew in understanding and as a result of additional personal research.

In our early pre-ministerial training, we were taught that the apostle Paul instructed Titus to “ordain elders” after giving him the spiritual *qualifications* of those to be selected (Tit. 1:5-9). The final qualification in the list of requirements to be in the true ministry of Jesus Christ is that a man must “HOLD FAST the faithful word *as he has been taught.*” And obviously, the teaching that he is to hold to must come through the faithful GOVERNMENT OF GOD within the true Church of God (Matt. 16:18), the only one headed by the living Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). History has shown that even many of those who were taught the correct meaning of true doctrine—God’s true ministers through the ages—including the many passages that support the Bible’s doctrines, ultimately will not hold them without compromise.

This compilation contains the correct understanding—the true meanings—of these “difficult” scriptures that were taught to me and to all of God’s ministers by Herbert W. Armstrong and the then faithful faculty that he appointed. These explanations are a part of the extraordinary doctrinal understanding that was restored to God’s Church in the twentieth century through Mr. Armstrong (Matt. 17:11; Mal. 4:5-6). I now teach them to you, hoping that they will benefit you as much as they have the many thousands who learned them before you—and as they did my father.

A word of caution: The Introduction that follows is truly vital to comprehend, and thus longer than would normally be necessary. It is actually the equivalent of a lengthy article or even a small booklet. There is a reason for this.

You simply cannot skip over it and hope to understand the explanations that follow!

Introduction

Modern Christendom misunderstands, twists, perverts and ignores the many plain truths of the Bible. Over the centuries, it has counterfeited every one of its true doctrines and replaced it with a cheap substitute. This has been possible because certain less easy to understand passages of Scripture can be easily misrepresented—made to say something that they do not. It is these verses that invariably become the vehicle through which a false doctrine can be introduced—with almost no one able to recognize that it all may have begun with a single wrong scriptural premise.

Unaware of the most important rule of Bible study, most students of Scripture do not build their doctrinal understanding by beginning with the clearest verses on any subject. Rather, they enter God's Word with preconceived ideas and go in search of passages that *appear* to support what they have *assumed* it teaches. This makes them candidates for confusion and deception.

The apostle Peter stated that the apostle "Paul [wrote]...some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15-16). Understanding how most people think, and completely unaware of any of the rules of Bible study, some teachers and "scholars" can then much more easily take advantage of the way certain parts of God's Word have been written. This applies to many other areas of Scripture beyond what Paul wrote.

The theological institutes and seminaries of this world have developed a systematic way—and this can be done consciously or unconsciously (Rom. 8:7; Jer. 17:9)—of spinning, twisting or dismissing God's PLAIN WORDS and PLAIN MEANING in favor of making passages appear to say what they *need* them to say. These theologians and religionists portray—actually sell!—Satan's false doctrines through use of *specific verses*, wrongly understood, that supposedly teach their ideas. This permits them to come from a basis—a premise—of Bible AUTHORITY for their beliefs. This, in turn, helps them to much more easily snare the unwitting and unwary.

The apostle Paul warned of “dishonest” people who “handle the word of God *deceitfully*” (II Cor. 4:2), because they, like their students who are willing to believe them, “received not the *love* of the TRUTH” (II Thes. 2:10).

God's servants—*true* ministers—never, under *any* circumstances, follow these practices!

In most cases, if one is properly trained and sufficiently grounded in the truth of the Bible, it is quite easy to see through and expose the deceptive logic misapplied to a verse, and to correctly explain it.

Apostasy Comes

During the early 90s, the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) descended into full-blown apostasy. Many thousands of brethren lost sight of an enormous amount of basic Bible understanding. Thousands of survivors fled into an array of different offshoots of the Church. In addition, in the ensuing years, much greater doctrinal confusion and error has spread throughout these many organizations, *and* within the individual minds of those who reside in these groups. Part of the reason people could no longer fellowship together is that they no longer understood the Bible's difficult scriptures in the same way.

This paved the way for the fulfillment of Paul's warning, foretold about God's people at the end of the age—the “last days”: “The time will come when they will not *endure sound doctrine*” (II Tim. 4:3). This has become more true every day. More and more people *are* “turning away their ears from the truth” (vs. 4). A few verses earlier in the context, in the previous chapter, Paul had explained WHY: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, *deceiving, and being deceived*” (3:13). The next verse (vs. 14), contains God's instruction to all of His *true* servants to “CONTINUE YOU *in the*

things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them.”

Therefore, over time, I came to realize that it would be critically important to release the correct explanations of key passages to *everyone* for general use. I knew that if it was properly used it would help sincere people resist the onslaught of false teaching that is swallowing and destroying so many today—and yes, as has so often been the case historically, even in the true Church of God.

This volume can either help *you* “continue...in *the things* which you have learned and been assured of” *or* to learn some elements of the truth for the first time and be able to hold it fast in the face of “fables” that may only later confront you. But you will have to diligently apply yourself to what you are studying, or truths will not become and neither will they remain clear in your mind!

A vitally important question must be asked at this point: How could those who once knew the truth so completely lose sight of it? The answer lies in understanding what real conversion is.

What Enters at Conversion!

The Bible reveals that a real—a *true*—Christian is actually begotten at conversion with what the apostle James called the “word of truth” (1:18). When Christ was explaining to His disciples that the Comforter would come after His ascension to heaven, He twice referenced this in John’s gospel as the “Spirit of truth” (15:26; 16:13). The apostle Peter identified both of these terms as another way of referencing and describing the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38), given after repentance and baptism. We will see additional terms later.

The latter passage in John reveals that it is through the all-important Holy Spirit—the *Spirit*, or *Word*, of truth—that a person, as Jesus explained, is “guide[d]...into all truth.”

The meaning here is absolutely vital to grasp. To comprehend what Christ meant, we must examine a series of verses in careful sequence. This will make later study of the book more exciting, productive and rewarding!

First, in what has been called the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that His true followers would be those who build their “houses” on His “sayings”—meaning on His *words*. When He instructed them to build on a “rock,” and that it would protect them from “rain,” “floods,” and “winds” (Matt. 7:24-28), this is what He intended they

do. In other words, when new converts speak of building on Jesus Christ, they should actually be thinking of building on His INSTRUCTION—building as one who “hears these SAYINGS of mine, and *does* them” (vs. 24).

Next, in John 8, Christ was speaking to those who “believed on Him” (vs. 30). Recognizing their unseen murderous attitude, and realizing that they did not really care about His *teachings*, but had rather *assumed* that they were His followers, He explained to these “believers” that His disciples (Greek: students, learners or pupils) are only identified as *true* Christians “if [they] continue in *My word*, then are [they] My disciples indeed; and [they] shall know THE TRUTH, and THE TRUTH shall make [them] free” (vs. 31-32).

I repeat: This is vital understanding, and it relates directly to *why* this book should be important to you.

Let’s continue. Earlier in John, Jesus had explained to His disciples that He was “the Bread that came down from heaven that a man may eat thereof, and not die” and that that man “shall live forever” (6:50-51). In verse 63, He explained what He meant: “The *words* that I speak unto you, *they* are SPIRIT, and *they* are LIFE.”

This is an extraordinary statement, and most have absolutely no idea what Christ meant by it!

We must understand. Unlike any other book ever written, the Bible is, in a sense, alive—Paul calls it “quick” in Hebrews 4:12. In other words, the Bible is a LIVING BOOK. Those who study it must understand this, and that studying it is different than studying any work of men. When the Holy Spirit is at work inside a person, it is writing God’s words—His law—His truth—inside that person’s mind. This means that without this Spirit at work during Bible study, and this is even more true when studying difficult scriptures, there is no hope—none!—of achieving proper understanding.

Even those who are at the stage of just being “drawn” to Christ, not yet converted, have the Holy Spirit at work with them (not yet in them), making initial understanding possible. Take a moment to open your Bible and read John 6:44 and 65, followed by a careful reading of John 14:17. In fact, you literally *cannot* understand any of the points that I am explaining here if God, through His Spirit, is not either working *with* you—drawing you—or, if you are converted, *in* you (I Cor. 2:13-14).

Hebrews 4:12 also directly introduces a related point. The Bible is revealed to be a kind of “sword.” Notice: “For the WORD of God is

quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any *twoedged* sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

What exactly is Paul speaking of? How is this sword more fully defined? The question is answered in Ephesians 6, which describes the six essential pieces of what has been called the gospel armor—“helmet of salvation,” “breastplate of righteousness,” “loins girded with truth,” etc. Notice: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...and take... the sword *of the Spirit*, which is *the word of God*” (vs. 13, 17).

This is truly crucial understanding to every faithful Bible student. You simply must not miss this if you hope to understand God’s Word. The Bible is a living, Spirit sword, and this sword will cut *every* false doctrine to pieces, slicing with both sides—“two edges”—but this is only true *IF* the one wielding it has the Holy Spirit, and in abundance!

Anointed With Oil

Finally, before leaving the subject of conversion, let’s look at one more related point, connected through several additional passages. The first epistle of John describes the conversion process—receiving God’s Holy Spirit through begetting—as an “anointing” (I John 2:27). Of course, anointings are always done with *oil*, and we will return to what this means momentarily. The entire epistle repeatedly establishes the importance of truth. Early in the second chapter the connection between following the truth of God’s Word as the *only* means of perfecting the LOVE OF GOD is explained.

Let’s first notice: “But whoso **KEEPS HIS WORD** [never compromises it], in *him* [and no one else] verily is the *love of God* perfected” (vs. 5).

This, in itself, though not our focus here, is incredible knowledge that virtually no one understands. Millions talk about Christians having “love,” but almost none of them tie this to having the truth of the Bible! No wonder so few know the *Bible definition* of the love of God (I John 5:3; Rom. 13:10)—and then no wonder so few practice it.

Next, in I John 2, with the subject of the special anointing beginning in verse 21, verse 26 explains that it is only through this anointing—receiving the Word or Spirit of truth in the mind—that one can successfully resist those who could, as John warned, “seduce you”

from the truth. God's Spirit must be guiding diligent, daily Bible study for this to be possible.

Let's tie everything together. Matthew 25 describes the parable of the foolish and wise virgins. The foolish virgins were those among God's people who had permitted the "oil" to run from their "lamps" in the time just prior to the Return of Christ to earth.

What does this parable mean?—What is Christ describing?

Oil is a type of God's Spirit, and this oil lights the Bible. Psalm 119:105 declares, "Your *word* is a LAMP unto my feet, and a light unto my path." By now it should be clear that God's *Spirit* word of truth works together with Scripture—the *written* word of truth—in the converted mind. God's Word is such that the Holy Spirit and the study of it each reinforces the other. Lacking either one, the other becomes useless.

Millions of people study the Bible every day without being able to arrive at true understanding. Why? Because they do not have the Holy Spirit guiding their minds—they are not *truly* converted. At the same time, prophecy reveals that most of those today who in fact *do*, or *did* at one time, have the Holy Spirit allowed their supply of it to run low or completely out. Recognize that Jesus had also compared God's Spirit to moving water, explaining that it *flows out* of one's "belly" (John 7:37-39) actively producing "fruits" (Gal. 5:22-23).

God's Spirit is not static—it cannot be bottled up. It must be used and replenished on a daily basis (II Cor. 4:16). When the Holy Spirit dwindles in a person, truth and the ability to resist error is lost with it! This is because the lamp of God's Word—for those of these who may yet even be still willing to study it, and most are not—becomes utterly *useless* without this all-important oil that fuels and lights it in the mind of its reader.

The many thousands who lost sight of the truth they once held, allowed God's Spirit to wane within them. Having come to lack sufficient oil, made worse by a declining interest in diligent, serious Bible study, many were fooled into accepting the wrong explanation of many passages referenced in this book. They became the foolish virgins (or worse) of Matthew 25:1-12.

Most Never Understood

Many, indeed most, have not comprehended what you have just read. The churches of the world simply do not teach, or certainly do not

teach properly, what the last several pages have explained. It must be recognized that the vast majority who have thought themselves to be Christians through the ages—those who had never truly been begotten with the Holy Spirit word of truth in the first place—have understood virtually none of what is written here. The majority who will read what I have just explained are probably in this category. It is hoped that they will permanently benefit in ways that others have not. However, perhaps some who once understood these explanations will be able to recapture what they have lost.

In either case, determine now that you will keep this knowledge clear—completely straight!—in your mind! Determine that nothing will shake you from this true understanding.

The Purpose of Bible Study

Let's momentarily return to the subject of when a person is called to conversion.

In Matthew 13, Christ taught perhaps His longest parable, that of the sower and the seed. Verses 4 through 8 describe “seed” that fell either “by the way side,” “upon stony places,” “among thorns” or “into good ground.” Jesus explains that the seed is shown in each case to be “the word” that is sown in the hearts of human beings when God begins to work with them. Sadly, in three of the four cases described, the seed never fully germinates.

Christ interprets the parable from verses 18 through 23. The seed that landed by the way side was eaten by “birds”—a type of Satan—who “catches away that which was sown in the heart” before it can take root. The seed that fell in stony places was able to put down roots, but they were shallow, and the sun—a type of severe trials (“tribulation”) or persecution—was able to quickly scorch and dry out the plant so that it died. The seed that fell among “thorns” is the person who hears but the word is choked “by the cares of the world” and “riches.” Then there is the seed that landed on good ground, the person with a fertile attitude who not only “hears the word” but also “understands” it and goes on to “bear fruit.”

Only those who are in the last category—good ground—will benefit from the truth of the teaching brought in the explanation of the passages addressed later. You are urged to bring a right attitude, asking God for guidance and strength as you study them.

This leads to another important principle. Paul taught the assembled Ephesian ministry this: “I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to *build you up*, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

God’s Word certainly will build up those who study and employ it in their lives!

What Is At Stake

Paul wrote to the evangelist Timothy that people should “strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers,” then adding, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:14-15).

This single passage is loaded with key points, each one crucial.

First, is the instruction not to argue or debate about words. In the end, this can never accomplish anything—there is not even a chance that it will. Why? One either has God’s Spirit and will understand the overall intent of a passage or doctrine, or he does not, and nothing will improve his understanding and remove confusion (I Cor. 2:14). Next, is the basic command to *study*—period. This is then tied to being “approved unto God” instead of finding oneself “ashamed.” Finally, when so many twist, tangle and misrepresent the Bible, God’s workman is able to “*rightly* divide the word of truth.”

Carefully examine how each explanation that you will read does this. And when you wish to read or study further, see if the literature that may be referenced at the conclusion of a passage does not greatly expand your thinking.

Most people have no real idea what is the difference between the Old Covenant and New Testaments of their Bibles. Neither do their preachers. Never forget that the greatest—the ultimate!—difference between the nation of ancient Israel and New Testament Christianity is that God’s Law was then written by His *finger* on “tables of stone,” but is today written by His *Spirit* in “fleshy tables of the heart” (II Cor. 3:3)—the human mind!

Critics Will Appear

I hold no illusion that some will probably probe and may even carefully comb this publication looking for “loose bricks”—and seeking

reasons to attack it. If they cannot find “errors,” recognize some are willing to invent them (Rom. 1:30). This is partly because the truth threatens their cherished positions and traditions, but also because they do not have the Holy Spirit “guiding them into all truth.” This thinking is typical of Bible “critics”—those who would rather sit in judgment of scriptural understanding than be taught by the all-wise AUTHOR of Scripture Who is in fact judging *them*.

Of course, some true followers of Christ, members of the Church of God who possibly never grasped what the Church once officially taught regarding these passages, might *innocently* disagree with some explanations given here because they were never *fully* grounded in them. Others may devise new alternate meanings to suit personal agendas (Acts 17:21). I expect this. However, this is what the Church of God officially taught when it was still on track, prior to the apostasy.

What is recorded here is THE TRUTH!

Which Verses Included!

As explained, there have been various editions of the book, with it having first begun as a booklet. (The list of copyright dates will tell the reader when it has been updated.) With the passing of time came the need to include additional, difficult-to-understand passages. In fact, circumstances will probably require that certain other less clear scriptures are included in later editions.

Some may wonder why a certain passage may not have been included, or why certain others were. Deciding which particular scriptures to include or exclude is a subjective matter, and I certainly understand this. Obviously, no two people would choose the exact same passages in every case. As with some of my other lists of false teachings, first in the WCG, and then those currently taught among its “splinters,” decisions had to be made.

Also, because every project has a reasonable and natural limit, the explanations, in some cases, are only the very briefest synopsis of what could have been written. In certain of these cases, much more could have been said by bringing in various finer points of the Greek and Hebrew.

It is not the purpose of this book to lay out entire doctrines for understanding. That is the purpose of our vast array of other books, booklets, brochures, articles, magazines and Bible lessons. If you are

not familiar with the enormous amount of material that we offer, merely peruse our websites.

Conversely, some passages are explained in much greater detail than others. Sometimes this is because fuller explanations are found in other pieces of our literature, which we have periodically referenced, and brought here. But recognize that the hope is that the diligent Bible student will be inspired to pursue his own additional research.

Be aware that some passages that have been included were added because they are not *immediately* clear to those who read them, and are thus more difficult to understand. They were not added because they have been overtly or commonly misused to promote a false doctrine. In these cases, the passage's meaning has simply been clarified. A very few aid technical calculations regarding matters of dating events.

How to Use This Book

While some few of the verses to be examined were too long to include in the text, in most cases I begin by quoting the passage in question. Since it is best to use this book alongside an open Bible, the longer passages can be viewed and understood just as easily by reading them directly from your Bible. Otherwise, the explanation given always follows the quoted passage.

Scriptures are listed in the order they are found in the Bible. Of course, the *Table of Contents* will be helpful with page numbers and in finding whether a passage has been included.

The 1611 King James Version of the Bible is used throughout. We have only altered words like *thee* and *thou*, and others with *-eth* endings to make verses reflect modern English.

Rules of Bible Study—and Other Vital Material

The Bible's Difficult Scriptures Explained! is a Bible study guide. Therefore, the well-known, basic rules of Bible study apply—perhaps more than ever. This introduces the special, and crucially important, five-section Epilogue found at the back of the book. Each of these sections has been added for a reason—because it is in some way a necessary aid for the serious student of the Bible.

For the many who have never heard of them, Section I is an extensive explanation of the TWELVE rules of Bible study. Titled “The

Twelve Rules of Effective Bible Study,” it is absolutely critical to use in conjunction with the book. You are strongly urged to study and apply these RULES every time you study God’s Word.

But other sections will bring additional assistance to the reader. Next is “Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?” Many never take the time to PROVE the authority of the Bible—that it is the written, inspired Word of God. If this is you, you will want to read the extensive Section II very carefully.

Next is “How We Got the Bible.” Many merely assume the Bible is the correctly assembled Word of God. Others may not realize that the “canonization” of the books of the Bible has a history to it that can be researched. Section III removes doubt about *how* God assembled His Word so that you can be confident in its authenticity.

Following is “Which Translations Are Best?” (Section IV). Some translations of the Bible are helpful, some are not, and some should *never* be used—under any circumstances—because they are not translations at all, but rather paraphrases loaded with false doctrine and wrong thinking from the so-called scholars who created them.

Finally, comes “Study to Show Yourself Approved.” The title is taken from a direct admonition in II Timothy 2:15 to all who open the Scriptures. This fifth section contains additional helpful principles for the person who grasps what is at stake for anyone claiming to be a Christian—and who really desires to understand and have the mind of God.

Each of these sections cover additional important knowledge, principles and guidelines, useful for *every* Bible student. Some readers will find it better to read some, or even all, of the Epilogue—particularly “The Twelve Rules” in Section I!—*before* starting into the difficult scriptures. This is an individual decision, with no one right way to proceed. No matter when you read these sections, you will be glad you did.

Also, we have a powerful, well-researched brochure *Evolution – Facts, Fallacies and Implications*, which will be most helpful. Then there is our booklet *Does God Exist?* for those who need to start at the very beginning of how to approach the Bible. You have never read anything like them. Together, these not only remove all doubt about the existence of a Supreme, all-powerful Creator, but they also identify Him as the Author of the Bible. This, in turn, identifies *which* God is the Author of all life on Earth—including you!

Powerful Tool!

Properly understood, the material presented here can be a wonderful tool, one that can help you in a host of ways.

It will help you understand the purpose of human life and WHY YOU WERE BORN.

It will assist in equipping you to “be ready always to give an *answer* to every man that *asks* you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15).

It will help you to “rightly divide the word of truth” so that you never have to be “ashamed” before God, but will instead be “approved” by Him (II Tim. 2:15). Another way of saying this is that, with so much at stake, it will also help you to “endure sound doctrine,” and not be “turned to fables” (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Most important, however, it can also help “build you up” in the faith, “and to give you an *inheritance* among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). In other words, properly understanding the Bible’s more difficult scriptures will help you to “endure to the end,” so that you can be “saved” (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13).

Finally, and this is related to a point above, it will help any who diligently use these explanations *properly* to “be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” This passage is a direct continuation of Titus 1:9, which explains *why* the faithful minister teaches “as he has been taught,” even when it requires “rebuking them sharply that they may be sound in the faith” (vs. 13).

Study carefully. There are no shortcuts!

Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

Some skeptics have attempted to discredit the Bible by asserting that this passage places the original creation of earth as having occurred approximately 6,000 years ago. These critics then point to scientific evidence, which clearly indicates that the earth has existed for billions of years, as “proof” that Scripture is in error. But are verses one and two of Genesis 1 *both* speaking of the *original* creation?

The Hebrew word translated “was” in verse two is *hayah*. According to *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary*, this word may also be translated as “became.” This would indicate the passing of time between the event described in verse one, and the condition that later came to characterize earth as noted in verse two.

Isaiah 45:18 sheds more light on the subject: “For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, *He created it not in vain*, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.” The word translated “in vain” here, the Hebrew *tohu*, is the same word rendered as “without form” in Genesis 1:2. This decayed state, described

in verse two, had not been the earth's condition in the original creation (verse 1)—God did not create the earth “without form”! The Bible states that God is not the “author of confusion” (I Cor. 14:33), and that His word does not return to Him “void” (Isa. 55:11). Therefore, there must be, and is, a time “gap” of unknown length between verses one and two.

The state of chaos that came to engulf the planet at some point in this time gap was the result of Satan's rebellion—when the archangel Lucifer became the devil—as this fallen being had previously been in a position of rulership on Earth, with authority over a third of the angels (Isaiah 14:12-15; Rev. 12:4). Also notice the reaction of the angels when God created the earth: “...the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). Would the angels (“morning stars,” “sons of God”) have shouted for *joy* if God had initially created the earth “without form and void”?

Genesis 1:1 clearly refers to the *original creation* of the earth, while verse two begins the inspired record of the *re-creation* of a ruined surface—a kind of “rebuild” process that made the planet habitable for mankind. This is confirmed by Psalm 104:30: “You send forth Your spirit, they are created: and You *renew* the face of the earth.”

Suggested reading:

- *Who Is the Devil?*

Genesis 1:30

“And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.”

Does this passage teach that every kind of plant on Earth is fit for human consumption?

The latter part of this verse, “every green herb for meat [food],” must be understood in conjunction with Genesis 2:9, because many plants are poisonous. This latter verse states that plants only qualify for food if they are: (1) “pleasant to the sight,” and (2) “good for food.” Also, Genesis 1:30 states that some green herbs are given for insects. Finally, recognize that the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9 and 3:6) was forbidden, and it was obviously “green.”

Suggested reading:

- *God's Principles of Healthful Living*

Genesis 2:17

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.”

Bible critics and scoffers commonly use this passage to try to demonstrate that there is no authority behind the Bible—because Adam and Eve ate of the tree and did not die “in that day,” the exact day in which they ate.

There are two explanations, and both are correct: (1) God meant, “You are as good as dead in the day that you eat...” because, with this decision, Adam and Eve would have sealed their fate—would have put themselves under God’s death penalty for sin (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:27)—and (2) Adam died at 930 years of age (Gen. 5:5). This would be less than one *millennial day* within God’s Plan. God declares that a day is like 1,000 years to Him and vice-versa (Psa. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8)—and His Plan entails 7,000 years, or seven millennial days.

Suggested reading:

- *A World in Captivity*

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

At first examination, this verse is somewhat difficult to understand—even to determine what it is talking about. However, it is understood as the very first prophecy in the Bible about Jesus Christ. The “enmity” (hatred) between the *woman* (mankind or the New Testament Church) and the *serpent* (Satan) has always been a very real hatred. The verse addresses the serpent and has three applications of meaning:

(1) Most people—particularly women—do not like snakes.

(2) It reflects a duality of Satan vs. Christ and the children of the devil vs. the children of God within the world at large. See Romans 16:20 as a reference describing “enmity between your seed and her seed,” or the enmity in Satan’s world toward Christ’s Church.

(3) Most importantly, Satan had Christ killed—or the devil “bruised its [Christ’s] heel.” But, in doing this, Satan actually sealed his own fate, because a resurrected Jesus Christ will one day crush

the devil's government over this world. (The only way to kill a snake is to crush or cut off ["bruise"] its head.) Key: "it" refers to Christ and "you" refers to the devil.

It has long been recognized that the story of Achilles' Heel comes from this passage. Interestingly, Semiramis, the mother of Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-10), would have known about, and been able to counterfeit, this prophesied "mother and child"—"your seed and her seed"—relationship (of Mary and Jesus), depicted by this prophecy.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*

Genesis 4:23

"And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt."

Who are the two men killed by Lamech?

Records from ancient history records that Lamech did kill two men—his third-great grandfather Cain ("a man"), and Tubal-Cain ("a young man"), Lamech's son (vs. 19, 22). The phrase "to my hurt" is best translated "who hurts me."

Jewish tradition says that Lamech also killed the preacher of righteousness Enoch (5:24), but this is almost certainly not accurate. (See next explanation.)

No suggested reading.

Genesis 5:24

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Many interpret this verse as stating that God took Enoch to heaven, making this contrary to John 3:13, but that is not what the verse actually says. Where then did Enoch go?

Enoch was the seventh of eight preachers of righteousness (Gen. 5; II Pet. 2:4-5). He "walked with God"—faithfully obeyed God—for 300 years (vs. 21-24), until his death. He "was not" in the sense that he "was not found" (Heb. 11:5). Verse 5 explains that God "translated" him; here, the Greek term for "translated" means "to transfer or transport."

God removed Enoch's body to another location for burial (as He did with Moses, Deut. 34:6). The same Greek word for "translated" is also used in Acts 7:16 to describe Jacob's body being transported to Sychem for burial.

If Enoch had been taken to heaven and is still living to this day, he would still be *walking* with God—present tense. Enoch was not taken to heaven, but is in his grave awaiting his resurrection.

Enoch was Methuselah's father and Lamech's grandfather (the Lamech of Gen. 5:25-31). History and tradition both reveal that these two men corrupted themselves. This caused God to raise up Noah (Enoch's faithful great-grandson) to warn of a coming worldwide flood and to do a "work" (referenced in vs. 29) in that time. Methuselah died in the flood, and it can be determined that Lamech died five years before the flood (vs. 31). This can be proven through carefully connecting the chronology of the first few chapters of Genesis.

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*

Genesis 9:3

"Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

This verse seems to state that *all* living creatures are good for meat. But it also says that the standard for measuring this is "*even as the green herb*" (see Gen. 1:30 explanation).

Using this phrase as authority, human beings can no more eat all types of meat than they can eat all poisonous plants (again, Gen. 1:30). Recall that Noah had already by this time taken seven pairs of *clean* and one pair of *unclean* animals into the ark because: (1) he needed food, and (2) he must have known the difference between clean and unclean animals. Had Noah eaten even one of the unclean animals (pig, etc.), the pair could not have reproduced. Notice that "by sevens" (Gen. 7:2) is plural, but "by two" is singular. The two does not have an "s." There were only two of each unclean animal taken into the ark.

Suggested reading:

- *Are All Animals Good Food?*

Genesis 9:24-25

"And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

Who was the one cursed here for the sodomy committed against Noah? If Canaan was cursed (Noah's grandson), why does it *appear* to say that Noah's youngest son committed the act?

Canaan was cursed, and he *was* the youngest son of Ham (see 10:6). Canaan would not have been cursed by God if it was Ham who had sinned. Also, Ham was the *middle* son of Noah (see 9:18). The word “his” (vs. 24) means *Ham’s* youngest son. Also notice that verse 22 makes reference to “the father of *Canaan*.” Canaan is the object of this entire event. Noah, upon sobering up, undoubtedly knew what his grandson Canaan had done to him.

It is interesting that the word *Canaan* means *humiliated* and the verb form of his name means *to bend the knee*.

No suggested reading.

Genesis 11:26

“And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.”

Questions have arisen about the breakdown in the chronology of Genesis 11, specifically at verse 26. Compensation must be made for the wording of verse 26. We can demonstrate how the wording can lead to the wrong conclusion, and how to arrive at the correct chronology of Terah and Abram. Follow carefully.

Due to the fact that Abram became a central figure of the biblical record in Genesis, he was placed first ahead of his brothers, with the intent of honoring him as the preeminent patriarch. However, Abram was not the firstborn of Terah. The eldest son was Haran, who died before his father died. Haran was the father of Lot whom Abram had reared after his elder brother’s death.

In tracing the chronology of Genesis 11 to the birth of Abram, the wording of verse 26 can and does lead to erroneous calculations. Since Haran was the eldest son, Terah would have been 70 years of age when Haran was born. But when we trace to the date of Abram, obviously the age of Terah at Abram’s birth is not 70 years. As we will see later, Abram was born when his father was 130 years of age.

Genesis 11:31 states: “And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.” Later, Terah died as indicated in verse 32: “And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.”

Then we read of God’s call of Abram. Genesis 12:1 reveals, “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country,

and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you:" Acts 7:2-4 records more details about Abram's departure: "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Haran], and said unto him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran [Haran]: and from there, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell."

In Genesis 12:4 we find the age of Abram at the time he departed from Haran upon Terah's death: "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran." Above, we have already read that Terah was 205 years of age when he died (Gen. 11:32). To calculate the age of Terah when Abram was born we simply subtract 75 (Abram's age) from 205 (Terah's age at death). This gives us 130 years of age for Terah when Abram was born ($205 - 75 = 130$).

Therefore, in counting up the chronology of Genesis 11, and adding 130 years at the point of verse 26 (instead of 70 years as most mistakenly do), this will give a total of 427 years from the time the flood abated until the time of the call of Abram. This leads to the correct chronology of Genesis 11 and the correct basis for subsequent timing of later events.

No suggested reading.

Genesis 14:18

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and He was the priest of the most high God."

Who was Melchizedek? Answer: He was Jesus Christ!

Hebrews 6:19-20 and Hebrews 7:1-6 can be read phrase by phrase to prove this. Notice there: Only One who was God could be fully "righteous." Also, *men* do not know the way of "peace" (Isa. 59:8). Finally, having "no beginning or end" can only describe one who is eternal. This could not possibly refer to any human being. Note these passages:

- (1) Hebrews 5:5-6, 10
- (2) Psalms 110:4
- (3) Acts 2:24—Jesus Christ is alive today.

(4) Hebrews 4:14 and 5:5-6, again—references “High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.”

This subject is addressed more fully in the Hebrews 6:20-7:17 explanation.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 3 – Who and What Is God?*

Genesis 17:11

“And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.”

Many scoffers, who believe that the New Testament nullified everything in the Old Testament, cite this verse seeking to demonstrate that the Old Covenant was represented by physical circumcision, making everything else found there to be invalid. In other words, if the New Testament is the only thing for Christians today, the Law of God—the Ten Commandments, among other things—have no application.

But read verse 11 closely. It says that circumcision is a “token” of the covenant. The Hebrew word (#226 in *Strong’s Concordance*) can be translated “*sign, signal, omen, flag, beacon, evidence.*” The overall inference to be drawn is that circumcision is a *sign* of the covenant, not the covenant itself. The Old Covenant had both temporary, physical birthright promises to Israel’s descendants and eternal, spiritual promises to the few called by God. The spiritual promises, and *part* of the physical promises, are being fulfilled today, and will be fulfilled by salvation in the future.

Romans 2:28-29 shows that circumcision has been *changed*—not done away—and is now of “the heart”—conversion. Therefore, *physical* circumcision is no longer required but this practice, for a number of reasons, is still medically and hygienically prudent.

Suggested reading:

- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 14 – What Is the Old Covenant?*

Genesis 32:32

“Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank.”

Is avoiding the eating of this portion of an animal a tradition that Christians should observe today?

This is a custom the children of Israel began to observe voluntarily out of respect for their forefather Jacob. A renowned Jewish historian (who also recorded more about the Jews than any other historian), Flavius Josephus, stated that the Jews of Christ's time routinely observed this custom (Bk. I, Ch. XX, Sec. 2). Even today, some Orthodox Jews still follow this. However, nowhere in the Bible do we find that Jesus himself observed this custom. This is simply a tradition of men and is not binding upon Christians today. The passage merely records that it was happening—it does not say God wanted it.

While it is not *wrong* to observe this custom today, it is unnecessary.

No suggested reading.

Exodus 12:40-41

“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”

What was the 430-year time period referenced here?

Many have wrongly assumed that this passage meant Israel was in Egypt for 430 years. If this was *not* the case, then some *other* major event must have occurred 430 years before the time of the exodus. In fact, this is the case.

Exodus 12:40-41 best reads, “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was [completed] four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the [completion of] four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”

The 430-year span measured from the time of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-8), about the year 1873 B.C., until the exodus of 1443 B.C. This is confirmed by the following scripture:

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to your seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal. 3:16-18).

The covenant and promise made to Abraham preceded the giving of the Law (Ten Commandments) at Sinai, which occurred nearly two months after the exodus during the same year. Galatians 3:17 explicitly states that the span of 430 years was from the covenant with Abraham to Sinai. All the family of Jacob (Israel) went into Egypt (Gen. 46:1-6) in the year 1682 B.C. Since the exodus occurred in 1443, Israel had been in Egypt for about 239 years. She had fallen into slavery well after the death of Joseph.

For those who enjoy such calculation, here are the mathematical facts available from scripture so that we can perform the proper computation. Extra space is taken so the reader can appreciate through an interesting illustration how accurate dating of important historic biblical events can be determined.

We can approximate the time that Joseph was alive in Egypt by the following facts:

Joseph died at the age of 110 years (Gen. 50:26).

He began to reign at about the age of 30 (Gen. 41:46).

The 7 years of “plenty” had elapsed before Israel came into Egypt, plus 2 years of the famine had elapsed as well, leaving 5 years of famine remaining (Gen 45:11).

Thus $110 - 30 = 80$; then we subtract the 9 elapsed years: $80 - 9 = 71$ years.

Joseph was alive for 71 years while Israel was in Egypt.

We have seen the time that Joseph was alive while Israel was in Egypt. Before we arrive to the point that “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8), a few decades would have elapsed after his death—for he was highly esteemed by the generations that knew him. So we could add at least another 20 to 30 years to those 71 years, allowing for a new generation to mature, which would have placed Israel approximately 90 to 100 years in Egypt before becoming enslaved. Thus, of the 239 years in Egypt, as much as 150 years could have been spent in bitter bondage.

Apart from Galatians 3:17 showing the 430 years from the time of the covenant with Abraham until the exodus, we can calculate that span of time by what is recorded in Genesis. First, we need to find the span of time from the covenant until Israel went into Egypt. This is done by subtracting 239 years (the *total* time of Israel in Egypt) from the 430 years total span. Therefore, $430 - 239 = 191$ years. This 191-year span can be easily verified by the following points:

- Abraham was 99 years old at the time of the covenant (Gen. 17:1).
 - Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5).
 - Isaac lived 180 years (Gen 35:28).
 - Isaac was 60 years old at Jacob's birth; these men lived 120 years concurrently (Gen. 25:26).
 - Jacob lived in Egypt 17 years (Gen 47:28); he came into Egypt at age 130 (Gen. 47:9).
 - Jacob lived a total of 147 years; ($130 + 17 = 147$).
 - Since $147 - 120 = 27$, Jacob outlived Isaac by 27 years.
- Of the 27 years Jacob outlived Isaac, 17 were in Egypt; thus $27 - 17 = 10$ years.

Ten years elapsed from the death of Isaac until Israel entered Egypt.

We add the 1 year from the covenant until the birth of Isaac + Isaac's life span of 180 years + the 10 years that elapsed from Isaac's death until Israel entered Egypt.

Since $1 + 180 + 10 = 191$ years, this was the time from the covenant until entering Egypt.

The total time of 191 years + the 239 years in Egypt = 430 years as we saw in Galatians 3:17.

Rather than Israel suffering 430 years in bondage, we see the duration of suffering would have been approximately 150 years in this enslaved condition to the Egyptians. Considering the severity of the bondage, any greater length of time would have virtually destroyed the nation.

To summarize, Israel was in Egypt only 239 years and in bondage for about 150 years.

No suggested reading.

Exodus 34:28

“And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.”

Many have misunderstood this verse, believing that “he wrote” is a reference to Moses. They conclude that Moses must have written the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets. The hidden message in this point is to diminish the Ten Commandments, to make them appear to have come from Moses, not God.

Exodus 24:12 shows that this is an incorrect assumption. There, God instructed Moses, "...Come up to Me into the mount, and be there: and I will give you tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that you may teach them." Also, Exodus 31:18 states that God "...gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mt. Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God.*"

Also notice: "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (Ex. 32:16). These were the stone tablets that Moses later broke (vs. 19), when finding the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. God later commanded Moses (34:1), "Hew...two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which you broke." God (YHVH – "the Lord") clearly stated that HE would write the Ten Commandments *again*.

As the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the wilderness drew to a close, Moses recounted to them the ways that God had miraculously delivered them and provided for them. He stated this in Deuteronomy 5:22: "These words the Lord spoke unto all your assembly in the mount...with a great voice...and He wrote them in *two tables of stone*, and delivered them unto me." Here, Moses was referring to the first tablets of stone that God had given him, the ones which he had broken (Ex. 32:19).

In Deuteronomy 10:1-5, Moses went on to repeat to the congregation of Israel that it was God who had twice written the Ten Commandments. Clearly, God, not Moses, recorded this great Law in each case.

Suggested reading:

• *The Ten Commandments – "Nailed to the Cross" or Required for Salvation?*

Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5

"You shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shall you mar the corners of your beard."

"They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh."

Do these two passages forbid either haircuts or shaving?

It was the custom of some heathen nations to cut and trim their beards and hair into particular shapes in honor of certain pagan gods.

The Egyptians, for example, had their hair cut short and shaped in a way that what remained appeared in the form of a circle surrounding the head (the halo was derived from this practice). In another instance, a round spot would be shaved off. Both of these are indications of sun god worship.

Modern forms of such extremes include: extremely short or even no hair done to intimidate (e.g., Nazis, skinheads); strangely cut, colored or spiked hair to intimidate, but also to shock and attract undue attention (e.g., punk rockers, the more recent “Gothic” look, etc.); strangely cut and colored hair at sporting events (a form of idol worship); and many others.

However, shaving one’s facial hair and the regular cutting of the hair on one’s head for normal grooming is totally different and, in fact, should be common practices for Christians. Take time to read I Corinthians 11:14-15. As with most things, moderation and respect should play the higher role and, if there is any doubt, one should even “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thes. 5:22).

Suggested reading:

- *Worldliness – What Is it?*
- *Did Jesus Have Long Hair?*

Numbers 6:24-26

“*The LORD* bless you, and keep you: *the LORD* make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: *the LORD* lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

Some have asserted that these verses support the trinity simply because “the LORD” (in italics) is recorded three times. As silly as this is, it deserves some attention because it is the kind of passage trinitarians use to support their teaching.

Besides the fact that the New Testament does not, in fact, offer anything that helps bring the trinity to light in the Old Testament, another problem is that verses like these are used to confuse the symbolism associated with the number three. Throughout Scripture, we see a pattern of three used to denote completion of *time* and *events*—never in reference to God.

Consider these. God uses *three* annual Holy Day seasons to depict His Plan of salvation (Deut. 16:16), punctuated by *three* resurrections (I Thes. 4:16; Rev. 20:5-15). Jonah was in the belly of a great fish *three* days and *three* nights (Jonah 1:17). Christ pointed to Jonah, giving as the only sign that He was the Messiah the fact that

He would be *three* days and *three* nights in the grave (Matt. 12:39-40). Notice that these are all *time-related events*!

Merely because Numbers 6:24-26 references three things that the Lord does, trinitarian theologians and scholars actually claim this verse as one “proof” that even ancient Israel supposedly recognized a triune godhead.

Before we explain why they believe this, ask yourself if you see *any* part of this passage espousing a triune godhead? Of course not! And notice that it is “the LORD,” not the Father or the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned in all three places.

Then consider this: How can theologians attest that ancient Israel believed in the trinity when they later *rejected* Christ, accusing Him of blasphemy when He claimed to be God’s Son? And, as Acts 19:2 states of a group of Jews that had been baptized by John the Baptist, that they had not even “so much as heard *whether there be any Holy Spirit*.” If ancient Israel as a whole had recognized (in form or principle) the existence of the Holy Spirit as a third member of a supposed triune godhead, it makes no sense that these Jews could have no knowledge of it whatsoever?

Under thorough examination, such “proofs” disintegrate.

If belief in a trinity had been at the core of ancient Israel’s worship of God, and if Numbers 6:24-26 is a blueprint for it, why is this passage not explicit? If Numbers 6 constitutes a supposed trinitarian “deific formula,” as some assert, why would God hide its meaning in a cryptic and coded message, instead of clearly showing three members of the godhead in this passage? Further, phrased another way, in light of the all-important First Commandment—“You shall have no other gods before Me”—why would God leave such unnecessary mystery surrounding His supposed triune nature—and correct identity as the only true God—by using these kinds of obscure passages to send so-called “messages” to His followers?

He would not!

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*

Deuteronomy 22:13

“If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her.”

The Old Testament describes certain circumstances under which people obtained divorces. This passage sets the stage to discuss the

principle of fraud, always discovered *after* a marriage has occurred, but which can annul the marriage. This is the first of two passages, two chapters apart, that we will examine.

Notice: “If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and *hate her* [the husband, ready to consummate the marriage, finds something wrong with his new bride], and give occasions of speech against her [he is upset with her, raising some issue], and bring up an evil name upon her [slanders her reputation], and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid [virgin]: then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel’s virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: and the damsel’s father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hates her; and, lo, he has given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not your daughter a maid; and yet these are the *tokens* of my daughter’s virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.”

Though the Bible is not clear as to how this was done, Numbers chapter 5 indicates that these tokens may have involved a kind of litmus test, or “water test,” in which a determination could be made about the woman’s virginity. It may have also been something supernatural—provided by God—used to determine if a woman was a virgin on her wedding day.

Continuing in Deuteronomy 22: “And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him [because he was wrong!]; and they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he has brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; *he may not put her away all his days*. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she has wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shall you put evil away from among you” (vs. 14-21).

These are the basic instructions on the major type of fraud—where one party thought he or she was marrying a virgin and found out otherwise after marriage! (If the husband made false accusation, he kept the woman and the marriage continued.) If either party had lied, the marriage was fraudulent. It was over—annulled!—and the guilty party was put away, and in the Old Testament stoned to death. God takes this matter very seriously!

Moses was plain about this. However, there is no room in this passage for someone claiming, ten, fifteen or twenty-five years later, “I got a ‘pig in a poke’, something I did not bargain for,” trying to devise a case for fraud.

Keep this in mind. The above is not technically describing a divorce, but rather an *annulment*. God never bound the marriage, because one partner lied from the beginning! If there is a major problem, hidden from the beginning, and the person that learns it raises the issue, the marriage would be annulled.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

“When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find *no favor in his eyes*, because he has found some uncleanness in her [“some unseemly thing” or “some matter of nakedness”—in other words, perhaps she has been naked in front of another man]: then let him write her a bill of divorcement [better translated, “THAT HE write her a bill of divorcement**”], and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and you shall not cause the land to sin, which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance.”**

The Pharisees were very familiar with this passage and quoted it to Christ in Matthew 19, seeking to pin Him down with a trick question about who is, and is not, eligible for divorce and remarriage.

The beginning of the passage is a kind of “what if” situation. It neither forbids nor commands divorce, and does not really give *grounds* for divorce. These verses simply deal with *when* divorce happens.

God plainly states that He hates “putting away” (Mal. 2:16). This has always been His perspective of divorce! However, by the time Moses was teaching Israel (2,500 years after Genesis 2), men were obtaining divorces without regard to God’s will. As a result, God inspired Moses to explain, in effect, “*When* this happens, the man can never take his wife back.”

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

II Samuel 24:1

“And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah.’”

In a casual reading of II Samuel 24:1, it appears that the LORD was the one who moved David to number Israel. Yet, such a position would contradict God's integrity, because David's numbering of Israel's army constituted sin, by his own admission as the following scripture reveals: “And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech you, O LORD, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly” (II Sam. 24:10).

Would God actually tempt someone to sin, and then punish them in anger because they gave in to His persuasiveness? Of course not! Such a scenario has never happened. James 1:13 states that “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.”

Although God does not tempt mankind to sin, He allows all men to be tempted by circumstances in order to develop character and occasionally to test the level of that development. Also, Satan the devil, who certainly does regularly tempt all men, also directly tempted Christ in numerous ways in Matthew 4.

In light of these facts, a close examination of II Samuel 24:1 reveals a more complete picture. The term “he” is correctly translated from the Hebrew term denoting the personal pronoun in the third person masculine. Yet, in the Oxford edition of the King James Version of the Bible, a note in the margin explains that “he” is referring to Satan. Most Bible commentaries agree the “he” in verse 1 decidedly refers to the devil. Here is one example. The commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown states that God “permitted Satan to tempt David. Satan was the active mover...and the great tempter prevailed against the king.”

However, the scripture that conclusively settles this issue is found in I Chronicles 21:1. It reads: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” No ambiguities exist in this parallel verse, as it settles the question as to whom “he” refers in II Samuel 24:1.

No suggested reading.

I Kings 17:21

“And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray you, let this child’s soul come into him again.”

Does I Kings 17:21 prove that man has an immortal soul?

The word “soul” in this verse does not refer to an *immortal* soul. It is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*, meaning “breath” or “anything that breathes” (*Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*). This same word—*nephesh*—is found in Genesis 2:7. Notice: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul.” Notice the word “became.” In other words, men do not *have* souls—they *are* souls!

In I Kings 17:21, Elijah was praying that God return the “breath of life” to the dead little boy. God answered Elijah’s prayer and the boy was miraculously revived.

The Restored Church of God has prepared many booklets and articles that address the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul. Those listed below contain the most detail. Other verses are addressed later.

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*
- *Is there Life After Death?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 9 – Who and What Is Man?*

Isaiah 24:6

“Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.”

The Seventh-Day Adventists cite this passage to prove that the earth will be completely desolate during the Millennium, with everyone either dead or “gone to heaven.” However, notice that the end of the verse plainly states, “*and few men left.*” It is obvious, then, that *some* people will remain alive after Armageddon and the plagues of Revelation. Prophecy demonstrates that approximately 10 percent of humanity will survive this period. By any definition, even if it would be 640 million (10 percent of 6.4 billion alive today), this is “few” survivors.

Suggested reading:

- *Revelation Explained at Last!*
- *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!*

Isaiah 43:10

“You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and My servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me.”

The Jehovah's Witnesses use this passage as authority to preach door-to-door. But notice Luke 10:7, which shows that Christ directly instructed the apostles to *not* go from “house to house.” The Bible nowhere commands, or even suggests, Christians to actively *profess* Christ, but rather always to *confess* Him when confronted with the question of their belief (I Pet. 3:15).

Suggested reading:

- *Should You Preach to Others?*
- *Are You Being Called?*

Ezekiel 1 and 10

The reader will need to open his Bible to examine what are whole chapters in this case. Ezekiel was given “visions” (1:1) while he was among the Jewish captives in Babylon. Many are confused as to the “strange sights” that he describes, with some believing these are Bible references to UFOs.

Ezekiel saw four creatures (vs. 5) appear out of a great whirlwind. Verses 6-10 describe these angelic creatures. They carried “upon their heads” a platform made of a crystalline material. (The material was likely gold of such quality that it appeared as “transparent glass” – Rev. 21:21).

On this platform was a throne!

In vision, Ezekiel saw God seated on this throne. Ezekiel 1:26-28 describes God's appearance: “I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of His loins even upward and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about...This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.” This God being was the Eternal (YHWH) (vs. 28)—the same Personage Who later became Christ. (You may wish to read Revelation 1:13-16, which further expands on this description.)

The Bible also defines the purpose of the cherubim (Ezek. 10:1) and the wheels under the platform of God's throne. Various parts of the Bible show that God, at times, comes to Earth (Psa. 18:10; Ezek. 10:1-22). When He does, He arrives sitting upon His throne. The angels carry His throne at "lightning speed" (Ezek. 1:13) wherever God wishes to go.

The "wheel in the midst of a wheel" (Ezek. 1:16; 10:10) appear to be, in a sense, types of gyroscope assemblies—one is near the position of each of the cherubim. In Ezekiel 1:12, 17 and 10:11, the fact that "they turned not as they went" also confirms some form of spiritual gyroscopic platform. Even physical gyroscopic platforms in the guidance systems of airliners or guidance missiles always keep the same orientation—they never turn. Thus, as the platform described by Ezekiel travels across the universe, it maintains the same orientation.

No suggested reading.

Ezekiel 13:17-23

"Likewise, you son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy you against them, and say, Thus says the Lord God; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and will you save the souls alive that come unto you? And will you pollute Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to My people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus says the Lord God; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith you there hunt the souls to make them fly...Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and you shall know that I am the LORD. Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hand of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: therefore you shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver My people out of your hand: and you shall know that I am the LORD."

When reading through these verses, the question arises: Who is God talking about? Who are the "daughters" who "prophesy" and make "pillows" and "kerchiefs" in order to "hunt souls"?

The context of this chapter is the time just prior to the Day of the Lord (vs. 5). It addresses the “Christian” leaders of the modern-day descendants of Israel—mainly America and Britain.

Verses 1-16 mention false prophets, *men* who deceive the people. But in this day and age, more *women* are also becoming actively involved in preaching and missionary work. This prophecy addresses the ever-increasing number of false “prophetesses” active today.

Verse 17 shows that these false women ministers prophesy (proper translation: “preach”) out of their own hearts. They are not sent by God, nor are they preaching His message—the gospel, or good news, of the coming kingdom of God. These false leaders are also not warning (Isa. 58:1) the modern descendants of ancient Israel of the destruction to fall upon them if they do not heed, and repent of their sins. (See Ezekiel 3:19; 4:2-3; 5:2-4, 8-10, 12-17; 6:11-14; 12:10-16.)

A host of passages make plain that all false ministers are an abomination to God. But, despite the howling protests of “modernists,” He especially forbids women to be in positions of religious leadership (I Cor. 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-12).

By examining what these false ministers preach, one can better understand what false prophetesses preach—because their message is the same. They do not show the people their sins. Ezekiel further states that they have “...daubed the wall with untempered mortar” (13:10-15). (*Untempered* mortar does not contain the correct proportions of raw materials. This faulty construction results in walls that will not stand.) They have preached “smooth things” (Isa. 30:10) that will not get them fired or disciplined by boards of deacons who do not want to be told that they must obey God instead of being told about “love.” In other words, they have told the people what they *want* to hear instead of what they *need* to hear.

Also, these misguided “soothsayers” attempt to solve all of the world’s problems—literally fix the world—through various forms of “do-gooding,” which are the equivalent of taking an aspirin to try to cure cancer. Because of their neglect in pointing out to the people their sins, God’s wrath will be poured out upon them. They have spread (and are still spreading) a message of “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11).

Believing that God is somehow in a kind of cosmic wrestling match with Satan, these false ministers are in the business of “hunting

for souls” (13:18). They travel to the farthest reaches of the globe on their “soul-saving missions”—the very term they use. But they will be powerless to save the world from the punishment that God has promised in His Word (which they generally deny will really come).

The meanings of the terms “pillows” and “kerchiefs” are unclear. Some commentaries suggest that a better translation of “pillows” (Hebrew: *keceth* [#3704]) is “fillets” or “headbands.” They believe that “kerchiefs” (Hebrew: *micpacthath* [#4556]) is a reference to “long veils.” A long veil secured by a headband is an accurate description of part of the attire of members of certain female religious orders.

Other sources interpret “pillows” and “kerchiefs” to symbolize the soothing, feminine nature of the religion espoused and promoted by these false prophetesses. Many commentators believe that the use of these terms in the original Hebrew is in a merely figurative sense. The “pillows” are a reference to these women attempting to cover God’s hands, and thus conceal His power to rebuke sin. The “kerchiefs” picture the veil of spiritual blindness (II Cor. 4:4) that they cast over their devotees. The term “magic bands,” as it is translated in some English versions of the Bible, is refuted by certain Hebrew scholars.

These women actually pollute the Word of God among the people “for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread” (vs. 19). (Note: the Hebrew word *kiy* can be rendered as “for” or “with”). This means that they either use food to attract followers or actively request donations to support their mission. (More and more churches today are actually in fact bribing people with gifts to attend their services.)

Since these women do not teach their followers that the cause of world suffering is rooted in their disobedience to God’s laws, they will be punished (vs. 20-23).

Suggested reading:

- *How Religion Deceives You About Your Incredible Future*
- *Which Is the True Gospel?*

Micah 4:5

“For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.”

What is the meaning of “the name of his God” and “the name of the LORD our God”?

As the context shows, this verse will be fulfilled after Christ has returned to earth and ended all wars. All nations, both large and small, will be subject to Christ's rulership and rebuking. They will convert their instruments of war into tools for agricultural (vs. 3). War will no longer be fought anywhere on Earth. And happiness, peace and prosperity will be known throughout all nations (vs. 4).

Through Christ's headquarters at Jerusalem, people will receive true and proper education. They will worship the TRUE God in their own language—"the name of his God." The Israelis will worship in their own language—"we will walk in...our God." While they may also be able to use their native languages, all will be worshipping the same God.

Also, the phrase "walk every one in the name of his god" is almost certainly a reference to the many God Beings at that time—true Christians who have been born into the God Family at the First Resurrection upon Christ's Return—who will then rule the earth under Him.

Also, all people and nations will be taught a new language. This pure language will allow everyone to communicate with one another (Zeph. 3:9). Their native language will possibly exist side-by-side with one universal language—as is the case with English throughout the world today.

Suggested reading:

- *How Religion Deceives You About Your Incredible Future*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*

Zechariah 8:19

"Thus says the LORD of hosts; the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace."

This scripture mentions fasts that were held on the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months of the year. These fasts were proclaimed by men of Judah to commemorate four terrible events that fell upon the Jews during the days of the final defeat by the Babylonians.

The fasts depict the following events (listed chronologically):

Tenth month: Jeremiah 52:4-5 records the account of King Nebuchadnezzar setting up the final siege against Jerusalem in the tenth month during the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah.

Fourth month: Jeremiah 52:6-7 records the Babylonians breaking into Jerusalem due to the city being so weakened by famine after

sixteen months of the siege. This occurred during the fourth month of the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah.

Fifth month: In Jeremiah 52:12-14, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard of King Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem with his army and carried away valuables that were in the Temple, burned the Temple and the city, and took away many captives. This event occurred in the following month of the same year that the Babylonians broke into Jerusalem as noted above.

Seventh month: This fast commemorates the tragedy of Gedaliah and those with him at Mizpah being slain by Ishmael and his band of murderers. This account is recorded in Jeremiah 41:1-3. Gedaliah had been appointed governor by the Babylonians in the wake of the captivity to oversee those left behind to manage the land.

When Israel is once again obeying God's laws and following His way of life, God will have changed these humanly-appointed fasts. Zechariah 8:19 states that these days of sorrow "shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace." Verses 20-23 in the same context show that Judah will follow God and be blessed abundantly, thus no longer having a need to commemorate these horrific events. However, the commanded annual fast of the Day of Atonement will be kept, along with all of God's Holy Days (Zech. 14:16-19).

Suggested reading:

- *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*
- *What You Need to Know About Fasting*

Matthew 1:18

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

This is a key verse used in the attempt to prove that the Holy Spirit is a person. The idea is presented as follows: If the Holy Spirit performed the act of begetting Christ, it *must* be a person, not merely the power that emanates from God. This false reasoning neglects one important point.

Christ prayed to *another Being*, which He called *Father* (Matt. 6:6-15 and many other places). This proves that the Holy Spirit is merely the agent or power of God. The only other explanation would be that Christ was terribly confused about who His Father was. This

would also mean that He was confused about the entire Plan of God—because it is the Father-son relationship that all of us share with Christ to the Father that depicts how God is expanding His family.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*

Matthew 3:11

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.”

Some have thought that the baptism of fire *and* water baptism are both to be sought. Typically, Pentecostals speak of receiving the baptism of fire at the point of supposedly *truly* receiving the fullness of God’s Holy Spirit.

Notice verse 7, and see that John is talking to the Pharisees. These accusative, hypocritical, carnal-minded men were not qualified for water baptism in order to “flee from the wrath to come.” Verses 9-10 show that John warns them that they had not qualified and is saying in verse 11, in effect, “Look out, because One is coming who not only baptizes with water but with fire *also*.”

The meaning is that the lake of fire is a form of *liquid* fire, and being cast into it (the Bible punishment described for the wicked) constitutes a “baptism” (Rev. 20:14-15). Of course, none would want this baptism!

Suggested reading:

- *What Do You Mean Water Baptism?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 20 – About Water Baptism*
- *The Truth About Hell*
- *Understanding Tongues*

Matthew 3:17

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

If “no man has *seen* God” (I John 4:12) or “heard His *voice* at any time” (John 5:37), then whose voice is *this*?

The answer: Since Christ, the former *Logos* (the *Spokesman* or *Word*—John 1:1, 14) who spoke for God (Gen. 1:26), was His Son and was occupied with being a human being on Earth for 33 1/2

years, then an angel must have been “filling in” for Christ during this period.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 4:17

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

If God’s kingdom begins at Christ’s Return and the First Resurrection, then what does “at hand” mean? (See Luke 17:21 explanation to understand further.)

Christ meant that the knowledge, certainty and understanding of the kingdom was right where He was preaching at that moment—or it was immediately “at hand.” Also, Christ, as a member of the God Family, was a direct representative of the kingdom of God. This government was literally *His* government.

An ambassador, whose counsel might be sought in a matter, as an official representative of the U.S. to France (for instance), would not be surprised to have a French diplomat ask him for the “knowledge, counsel, opinions, etc.” of *his country*. Only the ambassador—not the country of France—need be present to offer this.

Luke 17:21 is used by Catholics alongside Matthew 4:17 to demonstrate that the kingdom of God is on Earth now, “in the hearts of men.” This false conclusion naturally follows the misunderstanding of “at hand.” But John 3:3-6 explains that one must be composed of Spirit to “see” the kingdom—because flesh and blood cannot (I Cor. 15:50). This is covered in much greater detail in the booklet below, and in a variety of our other books and booklets.

Suggested reading:

- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

Matthew 5:11-12

“Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

This passage is found just seven verses after Christ had said, “the meek shall inherit the earth.” Did Jesus somehow forget what He had just said? Or did He teach two separate rewards—one for the meek (earth) and another (heaven) for those who are persecuted for following Him? What *does* this scripture mean?

Read I Peter 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an *inheritance* incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, *reserved in heaven* for you.”

Notice the word *reserved*. It is the REWARD of Christians that is *reserved in heaven*, to be “revealed” (i.e., salvation) “in the last time” (vs. 5). Quite literally, every true Christian holds a reservation for a glorious future event. The apostle Peter says nothing about going to heaven to either obtain this reward or to stay there as the reward—only that a Christian’s reward is *reserved there* until the “last time”—when Christ returns. In this way, a Christian’s reward remains “in-corruptible,” “undefiled” and “unable to fade.”

Some also claim that I Peter 1:4 (expanded later) is, in itself, a “heaven proof text.” Recognize two points. The verse does not say that Christians are *going* to heaven to receive their reward. Here is why.

Revelation 22:12 states, “And, behold, I [Christ] *come* quickly; and MY REWARD IS WITH ME, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Also see I Cor. 15:50 and Matt. 25:34 to see *when* Christians inherit their reward.) Christ is coming to earth, bringing rewards with Him—not the other way around.

Suggested reading:

- *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?*
- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*

Matthew 7:6

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

The analogies of “dogs” and “swine” were used by Christ to demonstrate how people whose minds have not been opened by God to understand His truth react when they encounter spiritual knowledge. Jesus taught in John 6:44, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him...”

Christ was instructing the disciples not to go about trying to convert the masses. The Father would do the calling. Unless God is opening someone’s mind to spiritual understanding, they will treat His truth in the same manner that pigs would treat pearls or as dogs would treat something holy—as dirt. A pig would neither understand

nor appreciate the marvelous beauty and worth of the pearls, a type of the many wonderful truths of God. Neither would a person not being called by God understand the great value of the truths of His Word. He would, figuratively, “trample it underfoot,” and “rend” (attack) the one giving it.

One should never try to force God’s truths on others. Instead, God’s people *should* certainly “...be ready always to give an *answer* to every man that ASKS you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15). The Christian should always be prepared to answer questions that others may have, *if* they are asking sincerely—to learn—and not for the purpose of debate or argument. Often, when people honestly desire to understand what the Bible teaches, it can be an indication that God is opening that person’s mind.

In Matthew 13, Christ once again compares the truths of God to pearls. This account states, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (vs. 45-46). Like the merchant, who sold all that he had to purchase a pearl of great price, God expects His people to treat His truths as priceless gems.

Suggested reading:

- *Should You Preach to Others?*
- *Are You Being Called?*

Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.”

Does the Bible’s periodic reference to the kingdom of heaven mean that Christians are going there?

The Bible teaches that Christ and the apostles taught the gospel of the kingdom of God, referenced earlier. The word *gospel* is found 101 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and sometimes as “gospel of the kingdom.” Other times it appears as “gospel of the kingdom of God” or the equivalent phrase “gospel of the kingdom of heaven.”

Recognize that this version of the phrase says, “*OF* heaven,” not “*IN* heaven.” It is heaven’s kingdom. There is a big difference. Just as kingdom *OF* God means God’s kingdom, not the kingdom *IN*

God, the same is true of the kingdom *OF* heaven, or *heaven's kingdom*. The preposition “of” always connotes possession.

The phrase *kingdom of God* is synonymous in every case with *kingdom of heaven*.

Suggested reading:

- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*
- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*
- *Is There Life After Death?*
- *What is Your Reward in the Next Life?*

Matthew 8:12

“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

What does this mean? Who are “the children of the kingdom... cast out”?

Revelation 22:15 defines the types of people who are disqualified from entering the kingdom—left “without” (outside). Matthew 8:12 refers to the Jews, who had access to the knowledge of, and entrance into, the kingdom. They were one-twelfth of the “chosen people”—one-twelfth of the twelve tribes of Israel. Christ directly warns that many of them *could* miss out on what they once had free access to, because they were not properly responding to the knowledge that they had been given.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 10:28

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

This verse proves that men can kill the human *body*, but not the *soul*, which the passage reveals God *can* destroy. The “soul” is the *life* in a person, and this can only be a reference to *eternal life*, because any man can take the *physical* life of another human being. Ezekiel 18:4 and 20 plainly state that souls can die. Romans 6:23 agrees with that. However, at baptism, our “life” is hid with Christ (Col. 3:3) and belongs only to Him.

Luke 12:5 is a parallel account. There, people are told to fear the God who can bring eternal death in “gehenna fire”—not just someone who can end their *physical* life. This verse is another proof of the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul.

Suggested reading:

- *Is There Life After Death?*

Matthew 11:12

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”

How could the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, suffer violence, presumably at the hands of physical people? The *representatives* of the kingdom often suffered violence from those who hated their message. John the Baptist was beheaded, and Christ would later be crucified. Most of the prophets were tortured or killed, or both. History records that virtually all the apostles, except John, died in ways that involved torture and violence.

Notice the last phrase. There are two correct meanings: (1) Christ, as a representative of the kingdom, was taken by force, and (2) those who seek to enter the kingdom must struggle—battle—to do so. (The reader should take the time to examine the following passages: Ephesians 6:12; Luke 16:16 latter; Philippians 2:12-13; 3:14; II Corinthians 10:3-5; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Matthew 24:13; James 4:7-8; I Peter 5:9; I Corinthians 9:24-27; I Timothy 6:12—among others.) Notice the powerful action verbs—*wrestle, fight, war, endure, press, pull down, run, resist*—found in these verses.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 12:31-32

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? What is the unpardonable sin? Is it merely swearing or taking God’s name in vain? Is *any* form of swearing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and, therefore, unforgivable? The subject of the unpardonable sin is enormous, and the booklet referenced at the end must be read in conjunction with this very brief explanation of this verse offered here.

This verse explains that “*all manner* of sin and blasphemy” shall be forgiven, but that “blasphemy and speaking against the

Holy Spirit” are unpardonable—unforgivable. Therefore, identifying exactly what this offense is becomes supremely important. It is interesting that the Greek word for blasphemy (whether against the Holy Spirit or the Son of man) is the same. The key then must be who or what is spoken or blasphemed against, not the blasphemy itself.

Hebrews 6:4-6 explains that there are those who are unable to repent—who once had God’s Spirit, but let it completely slip away. Verse 4 says, “it is impossible” for these to repent because, in the process of falling away, a person loses all *desire* to repent and change.

Let’s examine Hebrews 10:26: “if we [Christians] sin willfully [this is in the present progressive tense] after that we have received the knowledge of the truth...” People can quench the Holy Spirit by overriding the way it guides them! Hebrews 3:13 reveals that the deceitfulness of sin can harden people—can get them to commit the unpardonable sin by allowing deceit to choke God’s Spirit. Eventually, this ongoing action becomes “willful” or premeditated. Verse 29 in chapter 10 explains that such people are practicing sin as a way of life and have therefore “trodden (Christ) under foot.” The key phrase describing the seriousness of this is that they “have done despite unto the Spirit of grace.”

Anyone can foolishly curse or use God’s name in vain, and sometimes be immediately sorry about it and repent. But the unpardonable sin is when a person *deliberately* hardens himself against God’s Spirit and the power of that Spirit. Usually, such people become deceived (Heb 3:13) early in the process, but later (willfully) choose to continue in their actions until they destroy their conscience and thus any desire to repent.

To speak against God’s Spirit is to *understand* what one is doing and to *knowingly* attribute the power of God to the devil (possibly the case with the Pharisees). Generally, it is to knowingly squelch, quench or ignore the warning pricks coming from God’s Spirit over time within a converted mind.

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is “The Unpardonable Sin”?*

Matthew 14:1-4

“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the

dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John [this had happened previously], and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him [in the past], It is not lawful for you to have her."

This passage records the beheading of John the Baptist as the result of what he had said to King Herod. It re-introduces the subject of divorce and remarriage, again, a far bigger subject than can be addressed in this short explanation.

This said, the question has arisen: In light of the truth about divorce and remarriage, and understanding which marriages God is and is not binding in this world, how is it that, if Herod's previous marriage was not bound, John could say to him that what he was doing was wrong? If God is not entering into the marriages of people in this world (Herod certainly *was* of this world)—not binding them—then how could John make this statement?

Let's understand. Since Herod was breaking the Sabbath, John could have said to him, "You're breaking the Sabbath." Was he being *judged* for this transgression? Was sin being imputed? Did he *know* that it was the Sabbath? Of course not. But anytime someone breaks the Sabbath—he *is* breaking the Sabbath!

John could as easily have said, "Herod, you're not tithing. You're stealing from God." Did Herod *know* he was stealing from God? No. Did he *know* tithing was in the Bible? No. Was he at that time being held accountable by God—for what he did not know? In other words, was he being *judged*? No. But, if anyone does not tithe, he is still stealing from God.

John could have told Herod, justifiably, that he should not marry someone who had been divorced. But John's statement did not mean that Herod's wife's first marriage had been bound by God. The present world is cut off from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2).

Romans 3:23 states, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Sin is sin. But the world is not now being *judged* for sinning, because the world generally does not *know* what sin is. While sin is not being imputed, people are still committing sin. It was in this way that John the Baptist could tell Herod it was not *lawful* for him to have his brother's wife.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*
- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*

Matthew 16:18

“And I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

This verse is central Catholic theology regarding the authority of popes, who are said to derive their authority from Christ's supposed empowerment of Peter, and thus his successors. This passage is thought to designate Peter as the first pope.

Breaking down the important Greek words within this verse makes it easier to understand:

Peter comes from *petros* (Greek #4074 Strong's) meaning *a piece of rock, but either bigger or smaller than a stone* (Greek *lithos* #3037 Strong's). *Rock* comes from *petra* (Greek #4073 Strong's) meaning *a mass of rock, usually very large*.

Peter was a small rock. Jesus Christ is the large rock, or foundation stone of the Church He built. Christ is distinguishing between the two. Proof that the mass of rock is Christ can be found in I Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 2:20, Matthew 7:24 and 16:13-16.

Understand that Christ is the great Rock that the Church is built upon. This verse is absolutely not saying that *Peter* is a rock or that the Church is built on *him*. I Corinthians 3:11 shows there can be only one foundation (Christ), not two. This applies to Peter's role. Ephesians 4:11-12 explains that apostles (Peter, Paul, John, etc.) were merely in offices that Christ established to serve His Church. Collectively, with the prophets, they form *part* of the Church's foundation—with Christ (Eph. 2:20).

Think of Christ as complimenting Peter. Then there is this: If He had established him as the first (infallible) pope, how could Peter almost immediately have fallen into what Christ labeled a satanic attitude in the very next verses, 21 to 23? Would such an attitude be possible for one who was infallible? Also, there is this question: How could Peter have later denied Christ three times?

Here are ten PROOFS that Peter was *never* at Rome—and therefore could not have been the first pope:

(1) Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16; Gal. 2:7) not Peter. Rome was a Gentile city.

(2) The Emperor Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome in A.D. 50 (also see #9 below).

(3) Peter went to Babylon—in Mesopotamia (I Pet. 5:13).

(4) Paul would never have written what he did in Romans 1 (the

book was written in A.D. 55), verses 11 and 15—clear insults to Peter if he had been faithfully serving there for thirteen previous years (from A.D. 42), particularly if it had been as pope. Actually, *a* “Peter,” Simon Magus (see the account in Acts 8), *was* there. It was *this* Simon (not Simon Peter) who was the *Pater* (or Peter), which means “a father.” (*Paternity* and *patriarch* come from this word.) Simon Magus was already by this time the leading figure in the early apostate church at Rome.

(5) Romans 15:20—Paul declared that he would not preach (or write) upon any *other man’s* foundation. Yet, Paul wrote the letter to the Romans. Thus, Peter could not have laid the foundation of the Roman congregation.

(6) Romans 16 contains thirty different salutations, yet Peter, supposedly the resident “pope” there, was not greeted by Paul. Think of what a grievous slight this would have been had he been present. Paul’s epistle did not even acknowledge Peter.

(7) Galatians 1:18-19 and 2:7 demonstrate that Peter was based *at Jerusalem*, from where he periodically traveled to places like Bithynia, Northern Galatia and Babylon, and other places where Israelites (also see #9) had migrated, from A.D. 38 to A.D. 49—the dates of these events described in Galatians.

(8) Luke 22:24—If Peter was already designated to be the future pope, why did the disciples argue among themselves about which of them was the greatest?

(9) Galatians 2:7 reveals that Peter took the gospel to “the circumcision”—the Jews, and the other tribes of Israel, referenced in #7. (See Matthew 10:5-6.)

(10) II Timothy 4:10-11 mentions that Paul wrote *from Rome* and records that “*only Luke* was with him.” This eliminates Peter.

Suggested reading:

- *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*

Matthew 17:1-3

“And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.”

Many have badly misunderstood this “transfiguration.” In this account, Peter, James and John saw Christ in glory—“transfig-

ured”—and appearing with Moses and Elijah. Had these men gone to heaven?

For those who will simply believe the Bible, the obvious explanation lies in verse 9: “Tell the *vision* to no man.” This entire account is a *vision*! It involved what three men saw (vs. 7-8) *IN VISION*. The subject of the vision was not to address where these men were. Remember, Christ stated that no man has ascended to heaven (John 3:13). Certainly this would apply to Moses and Elijah.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 19:3-9

“The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have you not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. They said unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away does commit adultery.”

The topic, once again, is divorce and remarriage. The explanation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 should be reviewed with this one.

In this account, the Pharisees were trying to see whether Christ (read vs. 8-9) would “side” with either: (1) God, from the time of Adam, or (2) Moses, from the *time* of Moses—when the issue in the law (end of verse 3) referred to was amended—to that present time. Had Christ sided with either of these to the exclusion of the other, the Pharisees would have accused Him of blasphemy. Christ outwitted His questioners by stating that both periods were correct! The fact that God allowed no divorce was correct. The fact that Moses did *permit*—not *COMMAND*—divorce for reasons of “hardness of heart” was also correct.

Why? Let’s examine each verse:

vs. 5—Describes marriage by God.

vs. 6—The governments of men have no authority to permit divorce.

vs. 7—Moses did allow it.

vs. 8—He allowed it because people can be hardened (the Greek word means *callused or hardhearted*). There are those who are unable to overlook certain sins—they simply cannot *forgive* them! Adultery can be one of them. Interestingly, the English word translated *hardness* (vs. 8) comes from the Greek word *sklerokardia*, from which come *sclerosis*, *arteriosclerosis* and *atherosclerosis* (hardening of the arteries). The word *cardiac* (meaning, of the heart) comes from *kardia*.

Remember also that, in verse 3, the Pharisees had wanted to know if “*any cause*” for divorce was a good enough reason.

vs. 9—The answer to their question is simply ‘no.’ Christ went on to explain that only for “fornication” (Greek *porneia* includes *fornication*, *looseness* and *promiscuity*) could divorce be lawfully pursued. Divorce because of fornication would often be done in the form of annulment.

If one commits sexual immorality after marriage, for a long enough period, the person has evidenced himself or herself to have now become an unbeliever—or to never have been one. The marriage could then end, and the believing party would be free to remarry on the basis of I Corinthians 7:12-15. Paul explained that the unbelieving party would have departed anyway, and the marriage bond would have been severed by God’s permission.

The Church of God understands, and has always taught, that the simple act of one-time adultery—however grievous the impact on the marriage—would not be enough to end the marriage bond and allow a person to divorce and be eligible to remarry, though it might cause a couple to choose separation. One act of adultery does not automatically mean a person has become an unbeliever. Many have fully repented of this sin.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

Matthew 19:10-12

“His disciples said unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and

there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

This discussion is a continuation of the previous verses. The context leading to verse 12 is that of any man (end of vs. 10) who has put away his wife. Christ's disciples suggest that it would then be "not good" to marry. Note that nothing about "forbidden" is said.

Verse 11 states that some are able to or must remain unmarried. Verse 12 describes three such types of eunuchs: (1) "Eunuchs from their mother's womb" are unmarried men who remain single men and virgins for life, (2) "eunuchs of men" are castrated men, found in some societies, who have had this procedure forcibly done to them so that they can be trusted with wives and harem girls, and (3) "eunuchs for the kingdom" are men who have chosen to remain single to better serve God without encumbrance under difficult circumstances (such as Paul)—or this can refer to those who are bound in marriage to someone they do not or cannot live with. This would be because of circumstances described in I Corinthians 7:10-11.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 19:16-19

"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why call you Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments. He said unto Him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother: and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Why did Christ mention only five of the Ten Commandments be kept in order to receive eternal life? Does this mean the others were done away, with the usual focus being that Christ did not restate the Sabbath command?

The answer is an emphatic "No"! King David said, "*all His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever...*" (Psa. 111:7-8). Christ, as God of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:4), also stated, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). Hebrews 13:8 explains that Jesus Christ is the same—"yesterday, today and forever."

Because Christ was speaking to a Jew in the account, He had to clarify of which commandments He was speaking. By citing some of the Ten Commandments, Christ clarified that He was speaking about God's commands, not the commands of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish "Supreme Court") or those of any man.

To clarify this further, look at which commandments He did state: "You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother: and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Christ wanted to reassert to the listener the importance of loving one's neighbor (Matt. 19:22). The rich man's refusal to use his wealth to help others proved that he needed a reminder and lesson in these points.

One should also note the commandments that Christ did not directly mention: "You shall have no other gods before Me... You shall not make unto you any graven image... You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain... Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... You shall not covet..." (Ex. 20:3-8, 17).

Because Christ did not directly refer to these commandments, is it alright to break them? For instance, is it acceptable to worship other gods?—to swear?—to covet? The answer: Of course not! Yet, this obvious point is overlooked in the rush to do away with God's Sabbath command.

Notice James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of all." Christ inspired James to write that *every point* of the law is crucial. Christ did not need to state all Ten Commandments, because if one breaks any of them, he is guilty of breaking them all.

Suggested reading:

- *The Ten Commandments – "Nailed to the Cross" or Required for Salvation?*
- *See the articles mentioned after Exodus 34:28 explanation.*

Matthew 22:31-32

"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Does this passage mean that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive, and in heaven?

This text is often twisted in an attempt to prove that these three men are not really dead, since it states that God is the God “of the living.” Careful reading refutes this argument.

Jesus is speaking “touching [concerning] the resurrection.” He is not speaking of these men living in heaven now, but rather about who *must* be resurrected *in the future*, since God is the God “of the living.” This is the subject that He is explaining—the *resurrection*. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are dead (Heb. 9:27). Therefore, the God of the *living* MUST resurrect them—bring them *back to life*—at some point in His Plan. Recognize that this was the specific point Christ was addressing. He was not attempting, in one verse, to explain all of the other understanding about the *what, when, where* and *how* of that Master Plan!

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 8 – Is Heaven the Reward of the Saved?*

Matthew 25:41, 46

“Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Do these verses prove that there is an ever-burning hell?

They do not! The Greek word, *aiionios*, translated “everlasting,” means “*agelasting*.” The event referred to is the 1,000-year Millennium, when Satan and his demons will have been thrown into the bottomless pit and bound (Rev. 20:2-3). There are three separate phases of Satan’s “hell”:

(1) II Peter 2:4 (latter part): The 6,000 years that he has been cast down to earth, as explained by the Greek word *tartaroo*, which means *prison, incarcerate* or *place of restraint*. II Peter incorrectly translates *tartaroo* as “hell.”

(2) Revelation 20:1-3: 1,000 years in the bottomless pit.

(3) Jude 13 (latter part): Contains a reference to Satan being cast into “outer darkness” after the Millennium.

Matthew 25:46 also refers to an everlasting “punishment,” not “*punishing*.” Whenever death occurs, it is certainly an everlasting event—as far as the person is concerned. This helps to explain verse 41. Verses 41 and 46 must be understood together.

Suggested reading:

- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 10 – The Truth About Hell*

Matthew 26:17

“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

What specific day does this speak of? Many would conclude by reading the verse that it is talking about the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a high Holy Day. Let's examine this idea.

The King James Version italicizes the words “day” and “feast of.” Any time you see italicized words in the KJV, this tells you that these words were not found in the original texts (in this case, the original Greek). Italicized words were added by translators either to clarify the English, or because they thought it necessary to aid the overall meaning. A better translation of this verse is “Now [at] the first of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

The Greek word translated “first” is *protos*. It means the “foremost in time,” “foremost in order,” “beginning” or “to go before.” This precisely describes how the Passover always precedes or goes before the Days of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:5-6 makes this pattern unmistakably clear.

God considers the previous day over, and a new one beginning, at sunset (Lev. 23:32). The conversation between Christ and the disciples took place at sunset on the 13th of Nisan (Abib), the beginning of the 14th. Christ would introduce the New Testament Passover later that evening (Matt. 26:20).

Therefore, this verse is not referring to the first Holy Day, which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It actually refers to the day before that, the 14th of Abib, also known as Passover day. This day is the final day in which to prepare for the upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread, by putting all leavened bread out of the home (Ex. 12:18-19).

As a result, many in that day came to consider the Passover day to also be part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, explains that the eight-day spring festival period was commonly referred to as “the days of Unleavened Bread.” He also confirms the understanding that Passover day was the 14th—

not the 15th, which is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, beginning at sunset (*Antiquities of the Jews*). Luke 22:1 also reveals that the word Passover was often interchanged with the Days of Unleavened Bread, referring to the entire eight days.

So, Matthew 26:17 refers to the beginning of the 14th of Abib—Passover—not the 15th, the feast day. Because translators did not understand what we have covered here, they mistakenly inserted “feast of.”

Suggested reading:

- *Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*
- *How Often Should the Lord's Supper Be Taken?*
- *Christ's Crucifixion Was Not on Friday*

Matthew 26:52

“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again your sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

Does this state that people who “live by the sword will die by the sword?”

This verse is usually not read correctly by the casual reader. It actually reads, “all they that take the sword shall perish WITH the sword,” not *by* the sword, and there is a big difference. Here is the point: Christ is explaining that a sword cannot, of and by itself, protect anyone! One who attempts to use a sword for personal protection will ultimately die—despite the fact that there is a sword in his hand. His point is that we should not trust in swords, but rather in God. People should never trust in physical weapons for protection. This does not say that one carrying a sword, gun, knife, chain, or other weapon for protection, will die a violent death by the same kind of weapon.

Suggested reading:

- *War, Killing and the Military*

Matthew 27:9

“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value.”

Because of a similar prophecy found in the book of Zechariah (11:12-13), some believe that the word “Jeremiah” in Matthew 27:9 should have been translated “Zechariah.” However, the original Greek word is “Jeremiah.”

This verse must be read carefully to understand its meaning. As it states, the prophet Jeremiah was the speaker. However, this verse is not recorded in the book of Jeremiah, which, of course, he did write.

The Bible never contradicts itself (John 10:35). The obvious implication is that Jeremiah uttered the prophecy, but only at a later time was Zechariah inspired to record it.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 27:52-53

“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

Who were these “saints which slept and arose”? Does the resurrection referenced in verse 53 reflect proof that people die, are then resurrected and immediately go to heaven—as Protestants assert?

Though these *are* called saints in this account, Matthew wrote his gospel from a vantage point of many years later. These people probably, in most or all cases, *became* saints, in the fullest sense, after Pentecost in Acts 2. They likely were among the many followers of Christ who died of natural causes (like Lazarus in John 11) during His ministry without receiving an opportunity to be in the first resurrection.

Some claim that these saints were Moses, Abraham, Noah, etc. But if these people had tried to claim this *at the time*, no one would have believed them. So, this is merely unscriptural idle speculation. Also, whoever they were, they would have needed to be familiar with the Jerusalem area (see vs. 53).

I Timothy 6:16 shows that Jesus is the only one with immortality, and so this group must have been merely resurrected back to human *physical* form. Recall that they did “appear” unto *many*. Consider. Who would have believed strangers claiming that they were Moses or Abraham?

Notice also that verse 52 says that “the graves were opened”—the earthquake must have caused this! However, verse 53 states they came out of their graves “after His resurrection...”—which would have been *three days later*. Also, this timing disproves any idea that they went “straight to heaven with Christ” at His death, the assertion that many make in order to put the patriarchs of the Old Testament into the New Testament “heaven-is-the-reward-of-the-saved” false teaching.

No suggested reading.

Matthew 28:1-6

“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow: and for fear of Him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

Some feel these verses prove an “Easter Sunday” resurrection. Understand that the entire account speaks in the past tense. Verse 2 mentions that a great earthquake “*had been*” (the correct Greek tense). In effect, verse 6 says, “He has already gone; for He *is risen* [already].” This is because Christ had already been crucified on the previous Wednesday, and would have been raised on Saturday. Hence, He would have ALREADY BEEN GONE by Sunday morning!

Suggested reading:

- *Christ’s Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*
- *The True Origin of Easter*
- *Christ’s Crucifixion Was Not on Friday*

Matthew 28:19

“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Scholars and theologians have universally misunderstood the meaning of this instruction. We must ask: What does this scripture actually mean? Does it validate the trinity—that God is three persons in one being?

First, let’s understand some basics of this scripture. It is clear that all three have a name—but a name does not make something a person. People name all kinds of things—mountains, buildings, pets, cars, boats, planes, estates, and many more. The point is that just because there is a name for all three, this does not mean that all three are persons or personalities.

What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? This is not difficult. The Father and Son have a name and the Holy Spirit conveys or bears that name to His children.

Let's understand the baptism process more clearly.

The disciples were to baptize in the name of the Father, because it is the Father “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:15). In other words, the Father is the Head of the house—the family—and families traditionally carry the name of the father. Also, it is God's (the Father's) goodness that leads one to the recognition and repentance of his sins (Rom. 2:4).

The apostles were instructed to baptize in the name of the Son, because His death, in our stead, makes salvation possible (Rom. 5:8; II Pet. 3:9).

But they were also to baptize in the name of the Holy Spirit, because the Father uses that Spirit—His Spirit—as the power through which the begetting is performed (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit is the begetting agent.

This is what the passage means! God gives Christians His Holy Spirit, which is His seed. When they receive that seed, it gives them God's name—they become heirs with Jesus Christ. From the point of conversion, Christians carry the name of God. When understood, this is why the name of the true Church has always been the “Church of God.” The word “Church” (Greek: *ekklesia*) literally means “the called out ones”—human beings are called out of the world, begotten as God's children, put into His Church and given His name.

Note what John said about the “seed” within converted people: “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (I John 3:9). It is interesting that the Greek word for “seed” is *sperma*, from which comes the English word “sperm.” This makes plain that the Holy Spirit is the “sperm” or “seed” of God.

Notice another scripture, adding light to what the seed of God is: “Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again [Greek: *anagennao*, *begotten again*], not of corruptible *seed*, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever” (I Pet. 1:22-23).

While Christians will ultimately be *born again* into the kingdom of God at the resurrection, they are, at conversion, BEGOTTEN of God through the Holy Spirit. This is similar to the human reproductive system. As soon as the sperm of a father attaches to the egg of the mother, a child is conceived. The child is not yet born, although he is begotten of the physical seed—the father's sperm. We, once we have

received the Holy Spirit—the seed of God—are begotten in this life, but not yet BORN! Like any human father who would say that his wife is carrying his *child*, God speaks of the Church—described as the “Mother” of Christians (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 12)—as carrying His *children*.

So then, Matthew 28:19 clearly does not establish the trinity, but rather simply reveals that when we are baptized, we are given God’s name *through His Spirit*.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*

Mark 8:33

“But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get you behind Me, Satan: for you savor not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”

Why did Christ refer to Peter as “Satan”?

Let’s understand. Peter was the most outspoken of the disciples. This was not a trait that always served him well. (Notice Mark 14:47 and John 13:6-9.) In the Mark 8:33 account, Satan—the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), and “prince of the power of the air...[working] in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2)—had influenced Peter, causing him to “rebuke Him [Christ].”

Satan knows “...that he has but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). He does not want to give up his influence and hold on this world. Christ came to earth as a physical, flesh-and-blood human being in order to qualify to replace Satan.

Because of the closeness that Peter felt to Christ, he could not humanly accept the fact that Christ would have to die. Satan seized on Peter’s emotional tendencies and influenced him to rebuke Christ as he did. Christ recognized Satan’s influence. Another example of this is found in John 13:27.

Suggested reading:

- *Who Is the Devil?*

Mark 9:43-48

“And if your hand offend you, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot offend you, cut it off: it is better for you to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into

hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye offend you, pluck it out: it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

These verses *appear* to support the "ever-burning hell" idea. The word translated *hell* here is the Greek word *gehenna*, which references the "Valley of Hinnom." This was a small valley on the edge of Jerusalem where all the refuse of the city was regularly thrown and burned.

The fires in this valley were kept burning almost constantly. Even bodies of criminals were occasionally thrown there. Jesus likened it to a type of hell-fire. The term "never shall be quenched," or a similar phrase, is found five separate times in this passage. It means these fires were never really *put* out, but they could periodically *burn* out.

Christ meant that anything thrown into this valley would completely burn up before the fire could burn itself out. This condition would best be described as *unquenched* or "*unput*" out. For additional references to this valley, see Nehemiah 11:30, II Kings 23:10, and Jeremiah 19:6.

What is the meaning of the phrase "their worms die not"? This could only be maggots that appear in rotting bodies as they naturally decompose. This process helps to fulfill the Ecclesiastes 3:20 reference to "dust to dust." (During the Millennium, this fire will apparently burn continuously—Isa. 66:24). Some bodies did not burn in *gehenna*, but rather rotted there. There were often corpses, literally stuck on ledges without completely falling into the valley and, therefore, into the fire. In other words, two possible things could happen to bodies: (1) fall into the fire and burn up, or (2) get stuck on a ledge and be consumed by maggots.

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*

Luke 9:60

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the kingdom of God."

What does "Let the dead bury their dead" mean?

The context is about those who want to, or temporarily go back to, the old way of life and to the world. It *is* customary for a parent's

funeral arrangements to be taken care of by the children, but the verse is properly explained this way: (1) Let the *spiritually dead* take care of the physically dead, or (2) Christ may have meant that this particular man actually wanted to take care of his father for the entire period until he died and was buried, instead of serving God. Christ said that others could perform that duty, but that this man should seek the kingdom of God wholeheartedly (vs. 62).

Therefore, this does not mean that God's people should never bury their unconverted relatives or plan their funerals, but rather that they should not permit caring for them long term to choke their spiritual growth or cause them to compromise God's Way.

No suggested reading.

Luke 16:1-12

“And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And He called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of you? Give an account of your stewardship... If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?”

Often called the Parable of the Unjust Steward, what is this really talking about?

Open your Bible and we will examine this parable verse by verse:

vs. 1—Type of a Christian who is wasting his talents.

vs. 2—As he is called to judgment...

vs. 3—...he realizes time is short, so he has to work double-time to qualify for salvation.

vs. 4—He determines to make some friends.

vs. 5-7—This means that we should always strive to do whatever we can without necessarily telling people why. Also, no one should ever spiritually give up without at least attempting last-minute growth.

vs. 8—No explanation needed

vs. 9—The word translated “of” means “with” or “by means of.”

The word translated “mammon of unrighteousness” means “money, riches (see Matt. 6:19, 24) possessions.” The word translated “fail” means “die,”—death *is* certainly an “everlasting habitation.”

There are several additional keys to understanding this parable:

(1) Read James 4:4. But, Christians can make “friends” *in* the world (not “of the world”) by using the world’s monetary systems, to be received when necessary into people’s dwellings (houses) because there may be an emergency.

(2) God’s people should diligently tithe and give generous offerings *now*, so that the unconverted can one day join us in the eternal kingdom of God *later*.

(3) Christians may one day be received into the chosen country of the place of safety for “favors” that the Church may have done for that country. Finally, the emphasis is on the “you” of verse 9 and not “they” (the world). God merely mentions the world as a standard of comparison for our conduct.

No suggested reading.

Luke 16:19-31

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried...”

Once again, the reader should open his Bible to this extensive passage. The parable of “Lazarus and the Rich Man” is also best examined verse-by-verse:

vs. 19-21—Lazarus is a type of Abraham’s children who receive eternal life (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 4:16-17).

vs. 22-23—Many think these easy-to-misunderstand verses teach that evil people die and go straight to hell. The key point is that while Lazarus and the rich man died, it does not say *when* the rich man “lifted up his eyes in hell” (the Greek word *Hades* here means “the grave” and is not the Greek word *gehenna* which means “hell-fire”). Nor does it say *when* Lazarus joined Abraham.

vs. 24—Would the rich man only ask for water to cool his tongue if he was in an everburning hell with his feet and legs roasting? Of course not. This is a picture of the third resurrection (Rev. 20:12-13). And as the wall of flames approached, out of enormous fear, the rich man’s tongue dried up. In verses 23-25, mention is made of “torment.” The Greek word translated “tormented” is *odunao*. It means,

“to grieve, sorrow, torment, duress, distress, strain” and describes *mental*—not physical—anguish and torment. The rich man was literally “scared spitless” in torment (I John 4:18). The word *in* (vs. 24) is better rendered *by means of*.

vs. 25—The words “remember” and “now” indicate the passage of much time (Heb. 11:13). Recall that everything stops at death (Psa. 146:4, Ecc. 9:5). Also notice that the angels are involved (vs. 22). This must refer to the time of the First Resurrection at Christ’s Return (Matt. 25:31; I Thes. 4:16).

vs. 26—This “great gulf fixed” is a reference to what sin does (Isa. 59:1-2).

vs. 27-31—The rich man wanted to warn his five brothers by sending Lazarus (the “him” of vs. 27 and the “he” of vs. 28) to them. Verse 31 reveals that this was not necessary and would not work, anyway. This means that Lazarus remained dead in the grave after he died, and only later will join Abraham at the resurrection.

This passage is covered in much greater detail in the following booklet, with commentary on every verse.

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*

Luke 17:21

“Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Stated earlier, Catholics use this passage to teach that God’s kingdom is established in “men’s hearts,” and is found wherever the Catholic Church is. (It becomes the premise upon which missionaries function—to spread (their) “kingdom” around the world.) Reread the Matthew 4:17 explanation.

The phrase “within you” is more properly translated “in your midst.” (See the Revised Standard Version text and the New KJV margin.) Christ was standing “in the midst” of a number of people—*and He represented the kingdom of God!* It is important to recognize that He was talking to a group of Pharisees. The *Pharisees* hardly represented an example of “hearts” in which God was working! Recall that John 3:3-6 teaches that one must *be spirit* to see the kingdom of God. One cannot merely *have* God’s Spirit to do this.

Suggested reading:

- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*
- *Seven Proofs God’s Kingdom is Not Here Yet*

Luke 22:36

“Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”

Is Christ advocating violence—the use of a “sword” when necessary—in this passage?

It is evident that the subject is that of literal weapons. But Christ was not encouraging His disciples to defend themselves through violence, which would have contradicted His previous instruction in Matthew 5:38-39 against harming others.

Let’s understand.

In Luke 9:56, He had stated, “For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” In Matthew 5:44, He had instructed, “...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

In Luke 22:37, Jesus revealed the meaning of His statement: “For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, and He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end [they will be fulfilled].”

Why then did Christ instruct His disciples to get swords? The answer is to assure the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12 (which He had originally inspired as the God of the Old Testament, and now was quoting). Jesus was to be considered a lawbreaker (“transgressor”). He was in no way endorsing the use of weapons for the purpose of harming human beings (whether in self-defense or otherwise). In verse 51 of Luke 22, we see that when Peter drew a sword and struck the High Priest’s servant, cutting off his ear, Christ chastised him for his actions. He then healed the man by re-attaching his ear.

No suggested reading.

Luke 23:42-43

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me *when* You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in paradise.”

Along with the popular idea of a so-called “deathbed repentance,” supposedly represented by the thief’s belief, this account is often cited as proof that “the saved go to heaven.” The passage proves neither—and there are a number of points to examine.

Consider: King David was “a man after God’s own heart” (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Abraham was God’s “friend” (II Chron. 20:7) and the “father of the faithful” (Gal. 3:7-9). Moses was the meekest man who had ever lived (Num. 12:3) and spoke with God personally (Ex. 33:11). If none of these *great servants of God* had ascended to heaven (John 3:13), how is it possible that a *thief*, although repentant at the end of his life, could have a guaranteed—and immediate—reward in heaven?

Upon death, did Christ go *directly* to “paradise,” which *is* in heaven (II Cor. 12:4)? Did He promise the thief that he would join Him there the *same day*? Notice the key phrase “*when* You come into Your kingdom.” This alone shows there is an important time element involved in Christ’s statement.

Before continuing in Luke 23, read I Peter 3:19-20: “By which also He went and *preached unto the spirits in prison*; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

This scripture is often cited to prove that Christ was preaching to demon spirits in an ever-burning hell during the period *He* was supposedly in heaven, while His *body* was in the tomb. This reasoning shows the inconsistency of those who do not carefully study the Bible. It also ignores the time element in I Peter. Careful reading reveals that Christ preached to the “spirits in prison” *just before the Flood*, not when He was in the tomb. The Greek word for “prison” is *tartaroo*, meaning *prison or place of restraint*—the earth!

Could Christ have (1) preached to “demons in hell” while also (2) enjoying paradise (heaven?) during the three days and three nights that He was supposed to be in the tomb? Both would be impossible, and actually *neither* is true. When the full biblical truth is understood, when all relevant passages about death are put together, it is clear that Christ was completely dead, without consciousness of any kind, while in the tomb.

Now notice John 20:17. Christ told Mary Magdalene, four days *after* Luke 23:43 occurred, that He had still not been to heaven! Could He have so quickly forgotten what He told the thief?

Let’s reread Luke 23:43, but this time let’s read it with the comma *after* the word “today,” not before. Then realize that “shall you” is more commonly said as “you shall.” Therefore, the Greek is best

understood as “Verily I say unto you today, you shall be with Me in paradise.” In verse 42, the thief said, “*remember me when You come into Your kingdom.*” He would not say “*remember me,*” unless he understood that much time would pass before Christ could fulfill this promise. Christ used the word “today” as if to say, “Right now, *even while we are dying on a stake,* I can tell you with certainty that you shall be with Me in paradise.”

Also notice verse 42. The emphasis is that Christ would be *coming* somewhere—not that the thief would be *going* somewhere.

Christ could not have *literally* meant the same day, since He would not be resurrected until *three days and three nights* after burial (Matt. 12:40). Obviously, at the point Christ said this, He had not yet died. The three days and three nights had not even started. Since God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), and Christ and the Father are of the same mind (John 10:30), He was not telling the thief that he would be with Him “in heaven” that same day.

The meaning of the Luke 23 account is distorted because of a simple error in grammar. The comma, which follows Christ’s lead-in statement, “Verily, I say unto you...” was inserted and misplaced by men. It changed His entire meaning. The original Greek, the language of the New Testament, did not use certain punctuation, such as commas and quotation marks. Translators using their own discretion added them later. The correct rendering is, “Verily, I say unto you today [in other words, “I tell you right now”], shall you be with Me in Paradise.”

The Bible teaches that there are three resurrections (Rev. 20:4-15). Since the thief obviously had not been baptized and given God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), he cannot be among those raised in the First Resurrection (I Thes. 4:16). Since Christ did not condemn him, we know that he will not be raised in the Third Resurrection, which is for those who would not repent. These will all be destroyed (Rev. 20:6, 14-15). The thief will receive his opportunity for salvation in the Second Resurrection, to take place after the millennium (Rev. 20:5, 11-12). At that time, the world will truly be “paradise,” since Satan will have been bound and cast away, no longer permitted to deceive mankind (Rev. 20:1-3; 12:9).

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*
- *Christ’s Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*
- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*

Luke 24:21

“But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.”

The context of chapter 24 is the Sunday morning after Christ's Wednesday crucifixion. People try to use this scripture to prove that a Friday crucifixion/Sunday resurrection fulfills the meaning of “the third day since these things were done.”

Several keys unlock this verse: (1) The Greek term used here means “*at least* three days,” and (2) this would have been a logical term to use, because “these things” is plural—and any number of events in the last week could have been the starting point for measuring all that had happened before, during and after Christ's death! See verse 18 for the key to the context. Cleopas and the group with him were saying to Christ, in effect, “Where have *you* been? It's been *at least three days* since all of these things have occurred.” (Remember, Christ was unrecognized by them.) Verses 19-20 clarify what “things” of which Cleopas was generally speaking.

Suggested reading:

- *Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*
- *Christ's Crucifixion Was Not on Friday*

John 2:1-11

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus said unto her, Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come. His mother said unto the servants, whatsoever He said unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus said unto them, fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said unto them, draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and said unto him, Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but you have kept

the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”

Certain denominations that do not believe consumption of alcohol in any form or amount is permissible, teach that Jesus actually turned water into grape juice. Does this miracle involve wine or grape juice?

Several points prove this miracle involved wine:

(1) Wine, not grape juice, was commonly consumed at weddings at that time. Nothing is said implying that Jesus was out of step with proper custom.

(2) The Greek word for wine is *oinos*. It can only mean *fermented grape juice*.

(3) There would be no need for a “taster” (vs. 9) if this was grape juice. Typically, the “ruler of the feast” was the wine taster.

(4) Verse 10 shows concern over drinking the best wine *first* to properly appreciate its good taste! Only then—later—would the lesser quality wine normally be consumed. The consumption of grape juice would not raise this issue.

Suggested reading:

- *Is Drinking a Sin?*

John 3:5

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

How is one “born of water and the Spirit”? Some believe this is how God’s kingdom enters men’s hearts.

Without examining any other scripture, this thinking can be disproved with two points just from the context: (1) Verse 6 is speaking of someone who *is* Spirit. Notice the phrase, “and that which is born of the Spirit *is* Spirit,” and (2) Verse 5 states that *Christians enter* God’s kingdom. It does *not* say that the kingdom *enters into Christians or their hearts*.

Now notice several other verses, which clarify John 3:5:

James 1:18: God begets His children with the word.

I Peter 1:22-23: God’s truth is obeyed through or with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:26: We are all washed by the water of the word.

When taken together, these verses reveal that Christians are

washed by water *and* the word now—in this life. Also, the word translated *born* can be translated *begotten* and, in most other contexts, this would be the correct rendering. Initially, either word would seem to be acceptable as a proper translation in verse 5. However, verse 6 demonstrates that the only CORRECT meaning is *born*. The end result describes one who is *composed* of spirit—not just one who *has* it.

Suggested reading:

- *What Does “Born Again” Mean?*

John 4:15-19

“The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw. Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had *five husbands*; and he whom you now have is *not your husband*: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.”

This woman had been married five times. Christ acknowledged it. The question arises: To which husband was she bound? This, once again, introduces the subject of divorce and remarriage.

Some have concluded that Christ was, in effect, saying to the woman at the well, “The man you are with is not your husband, because you are bound to the first of your five husbands.”

This is not what Christ is talking about, because this is not a discussion or dissertation about divorce and remarriage. Understand that He was speaking rhetorically, more correctly saying, “You’ve been with five husbands, and now you’re living with another person (cohabiting outside marriage—what was once commonly referred to as “shacking up”).”

This was Christ’s reference. When one reads the full account, it becomes clear that divorce and remarriage is not the subject under discussion, and that Christ makes no comment about *which* husband she was bound to—about *which* of her five marriages was valid.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

John 8:15-16

“You judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.”

Did Christ contradict Himself in the same verse? How could He judge people when He had just said He judged no man? The answer becomes a lesson for everyone.

The first half of verse 15 speaks of *human* judgment after *outward appearance*, and by whatever *human ability* to judge that any man may possess. In context, Christ is saying that He did not judge anyone “after the flesh.” He went on to explain that, if He did have to judge, He relied on the Father to guide Him (by His Spirit). I Samuel 16:7 states that God judges the *heart*, not *outward appearances* and impressions. This is the biggest proof that God’s Spirit of *discernment* is the key to correctly evaluating, deciding upon or making assessments of people.

This verse certainly does not endorse the condemning of people to the lake of fire. This usurps the role of the Father, and it is this kind of judging that Christ condemns in Matthew 5:22.

Recognize that it is impossible for human beings to avoid making various decisions based on the conduct of others. Employers, coaches, leaders, parents and ministers cannot avoid periodically evaluating, assessing and making decisions about people as they work with them. But Christians cannot take to themselves God’s role and *condemn* people as worthy of destruction in the lake of fire because of what they may or may not see them do.

No suggested reading.

John 9:1-3

“And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Was the blind man healed by Christ *predestined* to be born blind?

The account explains that this man was blind from birth for a special purpose. Notice verse 3: “Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest [obvious] in him.” God carefully planned this event to show the world that Jesus Christ was His Son.

It is evident from this verse that the man’s blindness was unusual, and his condition set the stage for one of the most extraordinary miracles recorded in Scripture. It also heralded a fascinating

spiritual lesson inherent within the man's blindness, symbolizing the current status of this world.

Christ had certain tasks that God wanted Him to fulfill during His time on Earth. Consider this statement: "I must work the works of Him who sent Me" (vs. 4).

Healing this man's blindness was perhaps one of Christ's greatest miracles—works. The blind man himself stated this in verse 32: "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." The next verses show that no one present disputed this. No human had ever given someone his sight back. But Jesus Christ—with the power of God—was able to do so.

No suggested reading.

John 9:4

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work."

What is the "night when no man can work"? Three explanations apply:

(1) When people die—the final "night" of life—they can no longer perform Christian works. Their allotted time for service, growth and opportunity to overcome has ended.

(2) It refers to the local Jerusalem congregation, which the Roman General Titus would scatter in 69 A.D.

(3) Finally, it refers to the time at the end of the age (the present time), when "daytime" runs out for the *true* Church of God to any longer continue the Work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and warning the modern nations that have descended from ancient Israel. The Work of God is a very large subject, impossible to be covered in this brief explanation. The material below will be most helpful.

Suggested reading:

- *Which Is the True Gospel?*
- *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!*

John 10:16

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Who are the "other sheep" that Christ must bring to His fold? When understood, there are dual meanings, both of them correct:

(1) Christ sent His disciples to the “*lost sheep* of the house of Israel” in Matthew 10:6. These were Israelite sheep that were not part of the tribe of Judah (the Jews) living in Judea, which is generally the land that comprises modern-day Israel.

(2) The *Palestinian Jews* did not receive Christ when He came to them (John 1:11). This requires additional explanation.

In John 7:35, the Jews referred to these Palestinian Jews as “*the dispersed* among the Gentiles.” It is important to realize that Gentiles were *never* called “sheep.” (See Ephesians 2:11-13, where they were called “Uncircumcision” and “aliens.”) The “one fold” is the coming of the New Covenant, which was prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Hebrews 8:8, and which would be consummated in the birth of the New Testament Church. Eventually, the whole world will be converted. All Gentiles in God’s true Church today are a type of this soon-coming age!

Suggested reading:

- *Where Is God’s Church?*

John 10:34

“Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods.”

Jesus plainly declares in this scripture to those in His audience, “You are gods.” What does this statement mean, and why was it said after His statement in verse 30, “I and My Father are one”?

Jesus was accused of blasphemy, in verse 33, so He quoted Psalm 82:6. Of course, this scripture had been recorded in what the Jews called “their law” (same verse). This verse is actually a prophecy of *all* who would one day be born into the God Family. Romans 4:17 reveals that God often speaks of “*those things which be not as though they were,*” because, when He makes a promise, it is as good as done.

Those who understand the true plan of salvation recognize that eventually all true Christians literally *will* be “gods”! Critics try to twist the fact that Psalm 82:6 uses the Hebrew word *Elohim* as the word translated *gods*. They assert that this word can also be translated *judges*. This is true—*Elohim* *can* be translated either way. However, the Greeks had separate words for *judge* (*kritikos*) and *god* (*theos*). In effect, Christ *interpreted* Psalm 82:6 by selecting the Greek word *theos*, which can only mean *gods*. His purpose in this account was to emphasize that it was not blasphemy if He and His

Father were one—both were God!—since the ultimate destiny offered to every human being is to become a member of the God Family!

Suggested reading:

- *The Awesome Potential of Man*
- *How World Peace Will Come*
- *What Does “Born Again” Mean?*

John 13:17, 30

“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them...He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”

These questions arise: Did Judas take the Passover and did Christ wash his feet and eat with him?

Read verse 12. Obviously Christ *did* wash Judas' feet and *did* eat dinner with him (vs. 30—notice the term “received the sop,” or vs. 26, “dipped the sop”). These are references to eating a meal.

This account is important because it demonstrates the tremendous love that Christ has toward *everyone*, including Judas who would momentarily betray Him that very evening! Jesus was even willing to wash *this* man's feet and eat with him right up to the very moment of betrayal.

However, it is very important to note that Judas did *not* have the proper attitude for taking the Passover symbols of the bread and wine. This point is vital to consider because of its example. God does not want “just anyone” to partake of this most holy service (Matthew 26:21 proves this), to be observed only once each year.

While John's gospel does not record the actual taking of the bread and wine, Matthew's does. The same conversation is shown in both gospels. At the end of the conversation in John, it states that Judas left immediately. In Matthew, however, it is evident that the point at which Judas must have left is *after* verse 24.

No suggested reading.

John 14, 15 and 16

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you...”

Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of John contain the numerous verses cited most often as “proof” that the Holy Spirit is a person. John 14:17 is quoted above as one example. The word “*he*” is used in

verses 7, 8, 13, 14, 15 and others, in chapter 16. Only a relatively brief explanation can be offered here, with additional literature referenced.

The Greek word used here throughout is the exact same word found in Romans 8:16 (there translated “*itself*”). It is *ekinos*, and can be translated either “*it*” or “*he*.” The Greeks did not assign the masculine gender to *ekinos*.

In the Greek language (as with Romance languages like French, Italian and Spanish), nouns have gender. As a grammatical tool, they are designated as masculine, feminine or neuter. For example, *el libro*, in Spanish, means book and carries the masculine article *el*. Of course, books are neither male nor female. Therefore, where reference is made to the Holy Spirit, it is incorrectly translated “*he*,” instead of “*it*.”

In these three chapters, Christ many times referred to the Spirit as “the Comforter.” The masculine pronoun “*he*” is used in reference to the word “Comforter” (Greek: *parakletos*). This is a result of the grammatical structure of the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written. Gender was not assigned to the Holy Spirit, merely to the word used to describe it. This will be explained later.

Some other background explanation would also be helpful.

In the rest of the New Testament, the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning either “breath” or “spirit,” is translated “Spirit.” This word is the equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew word translated “spirit”—*rûah*. Grammatically, the word *pneuma* is neuter. Therefore, it is properly represented by the English pronoun “*it*.”

Let’s understand further. Christ stated, “I and My Father are One” (John 10:30). What does this mean? To properly understand what Christ meant, we must turn to the Old Testament.

Amos 3:3 asks a rhetorical question: “Can two walk together, except they be *agreed*?” Christ and the Father are *of the same mind*. They are unified in both thought and purpose. Notice that, in John 10:30, Christ did *not* say, “I and My Father *and the Holy Spirit* are One.” If God is a trinity, why would Christ have excluded the Holy Spirit in His explanation of the Godhead relationship?

This is a huge unanswered question.

In John 14:9, Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” Did Christ mean that He and the Father look alike? In shape and form, yes. Identical in appearance, no. By His *actions*, Christ

showed what the Father was like. God and Christ are of the same mind. In Luke 2, He asked, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" These scriptures show that Christ and the Father both *work*.

It is again important to note that Christ did *not* say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father *and the Holy Spirit*."

Then notice how John 1:1-3 shows the relationship that God and Christ have: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." Again, where is any mention of the Holy Spirit? Only two beings are referenced.

The Greek word *Logos*, translated "Word" in John 1, also means "spokesman." Psalm 33 shows the role that Christ had in the creation of the world: "By the *word of the LORD* were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (vs. 6).

A related question arises, however, and it can be addressed and also be helpful in the context of what has already been explained.

In Matthew 19:17, Christ asked a young man who had questioned Him about salvation, "Why call you Me good? There is none good but *One*, that is, God." If Christ knew that He was also God (Luke 2:49), what then did He mean by this?

Two things become apparent:

(1) He was giving deference to the Father (see John 14:28). Christ had completely emptied Himself of the power of the Godhead, taking on the form of physical flesh as a servant (Phil. 2:7). Christ was made of flesh, and there is nothing about flesh that is good. See Romans 7:18-24, among numerous other verses.

(2) In *anticipation* of the *reaction* in the young man—that he would *reject* Christ's answer (vs. 22)—Christ was showing the paradox of the young man's question. Consider. He called Christ, "*Good Master*," and professed to want to do whatever Christ said, but his actions showed that he did not believe that he was talking to God—one who was "good." Christ recognized that the young man had the same "worshipful" attitude held by so many who rejected Him. (See Luke 6:46; 20:17; Matt. 7:21; 21:42; 13:57; Mark 12:10; Acts 4:11.) Therefore, He was pointing the young man to what the Father requires.

Again, the following extensive book is vital for those who truly want to understand all of the many elements that comprise the false

doctrine that God is three-in-one. The serious reader will want to carefully study this book.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 16 – What Is the Holy Spirit?*

John 19:19

“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

What were the exact words that were written on the stake on which Christ was crucified? Each of the four gospels records a slightly different rendering, and this has created some confusion, and also caused some to actually doubt the validity of the Bible.

Why are the accounts different?

As in other gospel accounts, each gospel gives certain different emphasis. Read Luke 23:38, Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, and John 19:19. Each account represents a portion of a bigger picture. When placed together, they say, “THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

No suggested reading.

John 19:30

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.”

Why does this account state that Christ died at this point, and *then*, in verse 34, *appear* to say that He was speared *after* He was already dead? When truly understood, this explanation represents a subtle satanic plot designed to picture Christ’s death with a *very* wrong emphasis. The problem springs from the presence of two key translational errors.

The first is in verse 34. This passage reflects the wrong tense. It should reflect the Greek *aorist* tense (past tense), which would require *had pierced* instead of *pierced* and *had come* (the Greek is *came*). This is proven by Matthew 27:49. This scripture has an entire phrase left out that would make it properly conclude: “...and another took a spear and pierced His side and there came out water and blood.” *This* is why Jesus died in the next verse (vs. 50)!

What is the greater problem referenced earlier?

Many preachers and religionists teach that Jesus Christ actually

died of a broken heart, and the above wrong translation appears to substantiate this idea. In fact, Christ died because He bled to death!—and He was prophesied to die in this fashion! (See Exodus 12:6-7, Hebrews 9:22, Isaiah 53:7-8 and 12, Leviticus 17:11, Deuteronomy 14:21, Genesis 9:6, Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14.) When placed together, these verses demonstrate that Christ had to *shed His blood* for humanity.

Hebrews 9:22 shows that blood must be shed for sins to be forgiven. Ambassador College once had a copy of an original Greek manuscript from A.D. 300, which contains this phrase. Unfortunately, the phrase had become a marginal reference by the time the King James Version was produced in A.D. 1611. The Moffatt translation still contains it, but only in parentheses.

The entire reason that Christ died was part of a Master Plan by God. His suffering—and consequent death by blood loss—did not happen by accident, but rather was entirely by design. In addition to denying the truth of Scripture and the need for blood to be shed to forgive sins, the attempt to picture Christ with a broken heart (1) weakens Christ into One who was shocked by that which He was not really prepared to witness and (2) is a classic example of how the maudlin, sentimental Protestant view of Christ often rules their teaching.

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is Salvation?*

John 20:23

“Whose soever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins you retain, they are retained.”

Does this passage prove that the Catholic practice of confession to a priest is necessary for sins to be forgiven or not? Since *remit* means to “forgive,” does this verse support this idea?

This scripture actually refers to any sin or sins that a faithful minister can recognize have not been repented of. (See the John 8:15-16 explanation.) Of course, in cases where a minister has come to such a recognition, a sin unrepented of would have been left unforgiven *by God*—and thus “retained” to the person. For illustration, see Romans 16:17 about the need to occasionally “mark” one who is sowing division or teaching heresy, and then ask how any minister can possibly know to do this unless that minister recognizes he is dealing with someone who either will not or has not repent(ed). Discernment is vital.

It is simply not possible, and actually ridiculous, to draw the doctrine of regular, required confession from this verse.

No suggested reading.

Acts 1:5

“For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Pentecostals use this scripture to teach that one’s ultimate baptism is with God’s Spirit, not with water. But first notice that the passage does say, “John truly baptized *with water*...”

Some points to consider: (1) Acts 19:1-7 reveals that the key to John’s baptism was not just that it was by *immersion*, but also by *whose name* in which it was done, and (2) there had been no laying on of hands of those in the Acts account, so that these could *receive the Holy Spirit* (also see Heb. 6:2; Acts 8:14-20).

In his first sermon, on the Pentecost that began the New Testament Church in A.D. 31, Peter stated, “be baptized” (Acts 2:38). The Greek *baptiso* can only be translated *immersed*. If someone reasons that Christians are only “immersed” *in spirit*, then why did Peter say “be baptized [immersed]...and [then] you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”? The inference is that two separate events occur at conversion—repentance *and* baptism. The theology of most professing Christians plays down the spiritual *burial* that Christians must undergo. Realize that Satan does not want anyone’s sin buried—as Acts 2:38 shows is necessary for true forgiveness!

Suggested reading:

- *What Do You Mean Water Baptism?*

Acts 1:20

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.”

What do the phrases in this scripture mean, and why are they quoted from Old Testament passages with different contexts? Read Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. They show that Judas was to be *replaced*, but also that his home and everything familiar to his “habitation” would never be the same—would be “desolate” of *his* presence.

The fact that this is an Old Testament quote, made singular here, instead of its original plural form in Psalm 69:25, demonstrates that God can use *any* quote or phrase to prove or illustrate whatever His

point may be. This is exactly why this phrase was used, and it demonstrates that there is not always a single, closed meaning to every Bible passage! These two Old Testament scriptures were speaking of the wicked *in general* in both cases.

No suggested reading.

Acts 2:1-5

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.”

Is this biblical precedent for Pentecostal “tarry meetings?”

This passage is usually taken together with John 21:22-23, where people pray, wail, cry, shout, chant and often fall on the floor foaming at the mouth when “it comes”—supposedly the Holy Spirit?

Understand these points: (1) This is the *first* day of Pentecost ever kept by the New Testament Church, and (2) it was the time when God *first* sent His Holy Spirit to His Church. *This is why* those present spoke in tongues, and *this is why* there was the presence of mighty wind and fire! God used these powerful forces to signal a great event—the New Testament time of receiving His Holy Spirit had come (Joel 2:28-29). However, remember other verses explain that only by the laying on of hands (Acts 2:37-38; 19:1-6; Heb. 6:2) can Christians receive the Spirit of God.

Understand that the subject of “tongues” is large, and requires our full booklet to be properly addressed.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Tongues*

Acts 2:31

“He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

The question here is this: How could Christ have died and putrefaction (“corruption”) of His body not have begun?

First, the Greek word translated “hell” is *hades*, which simply means *the grave*. A body can go several days or longer without cor-

ruption (beginning of decomposition), if all of the blood has been removed. Certainly Christ did shed *all* of His blood, making this more possible. However, due to the extreme temperature in Jerusalem, God would have had to supernaturally preserve Christ's body from this natural process.

No suggested reading.

Acts 2:44-45

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

These two verses are referenced in the explanation of Acts 5:1-11, regarding supposed communism or socialism within the early Church of God—with brethren having “all things common.” The meaning in Acts 2 is not difficult to understand if one reads Acts 5:1-11 *first*. That account shows the decision to do this was made by choice, and was always as “men had need.” Therefore, the purpose was guided by how to best keep the Church in a position to help people in need in a time of general difficulty. Gathering possessions into a common location for distribution to the needy was not done to practice socialism, but rather because circumstances of extreme persecution at the time made this practical.

No suggested reading.

Acts 5:1, 3

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife...But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?”

Some use Acts 5 as another “proof” that the Holy Spirit is a person. This is because they do not carefully examine what is called “the Ananias and Sapphira account.”

In Acts 5:3-4, the apostle Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart *to lie to the Holy Spirit*, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied unto men, *but unto God.*”

Does this passage, in fact, prove that the Holy Spirit is a person or separate being within the Godhead? In other words, how could Peter state that Ananias and Sapphira were lying to it, if the Holy Spirit is merely the inanimate power or agent of God?

This is actually not very difficult to understand. It was the Holy Spirit that gave Peter the ability to *discern* (Heb. 5:14) Ananias and Sapphira's lies. Notice I Corinthians 2:11: "what man *knows* the things of a man, except by the *spirit of man* which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, except by the *Spirit of God*." Human beings learn by what this passage calls the "spirit of man," and this spirit is given to all people. Obviously, this does not mean that there is another *person* in each human person. Similarly, having the Holy Spirit in one does not mean there is another person in the person.

So, while there are things that human beings can learn and understand *without* having God's Holy Spirit, certain things can only be understood *with* His Spirit. Discerning *spiritual* things comes through God's Holy Spirit in the mind.

Christ demonstrated this ability of discernment in John 13:27: "And after the sop Satan entered into him [Judas]. Then said Jesus unto him, That you do, do quickly." Christ was able to recognize when the devil had entered Judas. Also notice Mark 8:33: "But when He [Christ] had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get you behind Me, Satan: for you savor not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." The Holy Spirit present in Christ's mind made this discernment possible.

To understand how Peter could "see through" Ananias and Sapphira, consider the following analogy:

An attorney is discussing an extremely technical legal matter with a potential client. The implications are such that only a lawyer with the utmost legal understanding could properly handle the case. Also, only with complete and total knowledge of every aspect and detail of the situation can the lawyer hope to proceed. But the client, having dishonest ulterior motives, intentionally omits some minor details. Those details are so minute that they could potentially escape the attention of an attorney not deeply, intricately versed in the law. But the attorney sees the deception for what it is. How does he see through it? *Because of the knowledge of the law that he possesses.* Without that knowledge, he would not recognize the lie for what it is. His knowledge of the law leads him to understand the man's ulterior motives.

However, if one lies to a farmer about a matter dealing with aerospace engineering, the farmer probably will not recognize the lie. Likewise, if one lies to a rocket scientist about a matter concern-

ing agriculture, the scientist will most likely not recognize it. Why? Because neither is versed in the particular subject being addressed. The lie goes “right over his head.”

It is the same with *spiritual* understanding: “Howbeit there is not in *every man* that knowledge” (I Cor. 8:7).

Realize that Romans 8:14 defines Christians: “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the sons of God.” They must allow the “Spirit of truth” (the same as the Spirit of God) to guide them (John 16:13).

In Acts 5, Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit working in his mind, was able to *discern* three things about Ananias and Sapphira:

- (1) They had conspired together on their way to see him.
- (2) Their sin and their motive.
- (3) The punishment they would receive.

After Pentecost in A.D. 31, God communicated to His servants through His Spirit (John 16:13). The above shows why Peter could say they were lying to the Holy Spirit.

Peter could say they were also *lying to God* because:

(1) Peter was the leading apostle in the Church of God. Christ had told him and the other disciples, “Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18).

(2) Christ had also told His disciples, “And whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14). Christ had given His disciples power to act on His behalf. God had to guide them in these matters, and the Holy Spirit is the way through which He does this.

(3) Conversely, He showed that anything done to or for Christians was considered to be done to or for *Him*. Notice: “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me” (Matt. 25:40).

Also notice the following Old Testament accounts:

(4) “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness...And in the morning, then you shall see the glory of the LORD; for that He hears your murmurings *against the LORD*: and what are we, *that you murmur against us?*...for that the LORD hears your murmurings which you murmur *against Him*: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but *against the LORD*” (Ex. 16:2, 7-8).

(5) “And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, *but they have rejected Me*, that I should not reign over them” (I Sam. 8:7).

All these passages illustrate why Peter could say that Ananias and Sapphira were lying to both God and the Holy Spirit. It was not because the Holy Spirit *is* a separate person in the Godhead. They were lying to one of God's apostles, in whom He was working—through the *power* of His Holy Spirit.

Also, consider Peter's statement, “You have not lied *unto men*.” Advocates of the trinity teaching ignore the fact that the husband and wife *had lied directly to Peter* (a man). Peter was a flesh-and-blood human being. Was he somehow elevating *himself* to the status of either God or the Holy Spirit? (See Acts 10:25-26; also 14:7-18.)

Why do trinitarians not consider *this* part of Peter's statement? Their argument has no strength, because it is *inconsistent* and does not examine *every aspect* of the account. As is always the case, religionists have taken a single scripture out of context and either ignored or twisted other scriptures, building a doctrinal “house of cards.” The wise are always able to see through it and knock it down.

Suggested reading:

- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 16 – What Is the Holy Spirit?*
- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*

Acts 5:1-11

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet...While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things...And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?...Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost...”

What was Ananias' and Sapphira's sin? Did they simply wish to keep money that was *already theirs*? Acts 2:44 has shown that, during this period, all people in the Church had "everything in common," meaning for common use. From Acts 5:1-11 we can conclude it meant *money and possessions*. This couple conspired (vs. 2) to "keep *part* of the price" of their land, when others gave everything they had (Acts 4:36-37), apparently by prior agreement, and this is the hidden key, not readily visible.

Their sin was lying, not stealing, as verse 4 makes clear. This couple tried to *deceive* Peter into believing that they were giving the entire sum they had been paid. Their sin was certainly not an unwillingness to become socialists. In fact, they obviously wanted to be thought of as more generous than they actually were. In other words, they had a problem with pride—vanity. And the matter was serious. The apostles had, no doubt, been acting on the knowledge that certain funds were coming. The impact of this deception on the Church must have been great.

Verse 4 shows they neither (1) had to sell the land *at all*, nor (2) had to give the entire value once they did. Lying occurred by saying that they were giving it all when they were not! That Ananias and Sapphira died is a powerful statement about how God views lying.

No suggested reading.

Acts 10:13

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

Does this account reveal that all animal flesh has been cleansed and may be eaten?

Many have used this verse to prove that the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are no longer in effect.

Here is the question: Did God command Peter to eat *any* kind of meat that he wished? The answer will become an obvious, No! God was merely illustrating Peter's attitude toward people, as we shall see. On a great sheet lowered from heaven were all types of unclean and common (ceremonially defiled) meats that Peter had never eaten and knew he should not eat. Also, Peter *never ate any of them* in the account (even symbolically, since what occurred was a vision). Critics presume to know what the vision meant *before* Peter did.

In verse 17, Peter was still in doubt—and he was the only one who saw the vision! In verse 19, his mind was still open as three men

came with the message about Cornelius, an Italian *gentile*. The biggest point that God wanted to make is explained by Peter in verse 28: “God has shown me that I should not call any *MAN* [not meat] common or unclean.” Verse 34-35 continues, “God is no respecter of *PERSONS* [not meats]: but *in every nation* he [a person] that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him.”

This vision was a means of showing Peter his inconsistency—his hypocrisy—toward non-Jews, and revealing to him that God viewed everyone equally and offered His Spirit to all men.

Suggested reading:

- *Are All Animals Good Food?*

Acts 13:2-4

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy [Spirit], departed unto Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

This scripture presents another perfect example of how so many religionists ignore context, sometimes vital context, focusing on a single aspect of a passage to make it say something it clearly does not. This one is supposedly proof of the personhood of the Holy Spirit, with it having “said” something.

Notice the seven elements of this scripture:

(1) “As they *ministered* to the Lord”: These men were seeking God’s will in a matter—specifically, the ordination of two men. James 4:8 states, “Draw near to God [not His Holy Spirit], and He will draw near to you.”

(2) “when they had fasted”: Fasting is one of the tools of Christian growth. It helps Christians acknowledge to God that they are nothing, of and by themselves, while allowing them to draw closer to Him. Fasting also binds Satan, blocking his influence. If you are drawing near to God, then you are also resisting Satan. And, as James 4:7 states, if you “Resist the devil...he will flee from you.” By fasting, these men demonstrated to God that they wanted His complete and total involvement in what they were doing.

Also, a fast involves going without food and drink for a period of *at least 24 hours*. Read Jeremiah 36:6; Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:35. So the period of time covered between Acts 13:2 and

verse 3 is at least 24 hours. (You may read our helpful article “What You Need to Know About Fasting” to learn more about how to fast.)

(3) “...the Holy Spirit said”: To properly understand this part of the scripture, review the Acts 5:3-4 explanation. If they had heard a literal voice from God, why would they have felt the need to *continue* in fasting and prayer? The men would have had their answer! None would suggest that God was speaking the same message to them non-stop for 24 hours. (Notice II Samuel 12:16-23; Daniel 10:3-13; Matthew 9:14-15.) They were being guided by the Holy Spirit within them, and they needed to be crystal clear about the intent of the message it was bringing. The sound of an audible voice eliminates any such need. Again, “For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

(4) “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called them*”: It is God the Father who does the calling (John 6:44, 65). The Holy Spirit is the *means* by which He does this. It is Christ who determines who will be used in the ministry—and in what capacity (I Cor. 12:28). Also, if this were a literal audible voice from a God Being, *spoken for all to hear*, it would have been accompanied by obvious displays of natural forces. (Notice John 5:37 and also Acts 9:3-7.)

(5) “...and prayed”: Prayer is another tool of Christian growth, used to make our needs known to God. It is also the way we ask God to make His will *known to us*. (See Matthew 6:10; 26:39, 42.) Again, if they had already received an audible answer, why would they have continued in prayer?

(6) “...and laid their hands on them”: The laying on of hands is a symbolic act when God is called upon, in faith, to bless and sanctify or to impart authority and power. The power of the Holy Spirit is involved in four different and individual purposes—blessings, baptism, healing and *ordination*—when this ceremony occurs. We can look at some examples of each.

Genesis 48:13-20 records that Ephraim and Manasseh received a unique and very *special blessing* when Israel (Jacob) laid hands upon them. The blessing of little children is also performed by the laying on of hands, as instructed by Christ (Mark 10:15-16; Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17).

In the *baptism ceremony*, the repentant person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit by having hands laid on him. This is first recorded in Acts 8:17-18: “Then laid they their hands on them, and they re-

ceived the Holy Spirit...through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given." Also see Acts 19:5-6 and II Timothy 1:6.

God's *healing* is also the result of an elder's prayer with faith, accompanied by the laying on of hands on the head of the afflicted person. We find this example in Acts 9:17: "...and Ananias [not the Ananias of Acts 5]...entered into the house; and *putting his hands on him* said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus...has sent me, that you might receive your sight."

Ordination into an office within God's Church is also done through the laying on of hands. The first example is found in Acts 6:6-8, involving the ordination of deacons: "...and when they had prayed, *they laid their hands on them*...And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." God's Church today faithfully observes this practice in all ordinations. Hebrews 6:2 specifically lists it as one of God's doctrines.

(7) "...*they sent them away*": These men were acting on God's behalf, ordaining men into higher offices in the ministry. This part of the verse reveals two things: (a) In addition to prayer and fasting, they had also *counseled* together in order to reach a wise decision (notice Proverbs 11:14; 15:22); (b) the Holy Spirit did not, of itself, send these men out. Again, notice that the verse states, "...*they* [Niger, Lucius, Manaen] sent them away."

Let's summarize the points: God, through the power of His Spirit, acting in response to those who were asking for His guidance, inspired the men involved to understand that He wanted Barnabas and Saul ordained.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 16 – What Is the Holy Spirit?*

Acts 13:17-20

"The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought He them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

This passage presents a mathematical problem. First, take a moment to read I Kings 6:1. How does the 480 years referenced there square with the “about 450 years” in Acts 13:17-20? Which period only goes “until Samuel”?

The word “until” (vs. 20) should properly be translated “including.” This time marks the period to the *end* of Samuel’s service. Now examine the math:

480 years (I Kgs. 6:1)

- 40 years (Acts 13:18)

440 years, which is “*about*...450 years” (vs. 20)

No suggested reading.

Romans 1:17

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

What does “from faith to faith” mean? How can one go from “having faith” to “having faith”?

Verse 16 explains that God’s overall Plan involves calling the Jew first, and then Gentiles. The Jews first demonstrated faith (end of vs. 16). Then, Acts 10:2 records the first Gentile who was converted, thus developing faith (end of Rom. 1:17).

Also, in a second application, there is another kind of *human* faith that all people have at certain times in their lives—but this faith must eventually be replaced by the *permanent* faith that only comes by the Spirit of God in converted minds (Gal. 5:21-22; 2:16).

Remember that Christ healed many people and praised their faith as He did. Consider that none of these people had the Holy Spirit. But they did have *human* faith! Finally, it does take human faith to even believe that we will be forgiven by Christ’s sacrifice, that God has called us, and that we will receive His Spirit, because all of *this belief* is expressed *prior to* baptism. After conversion, we live by the faith *of* Christ in us.

Suggested reading:

- *What Is Real Faith?*

Romans 2:16

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

What are the “secrets of men” spoken of by Paul? Before proceeding, read verses 11 to 16 for context. Notice a parenthesis begin-

ning at verse 13 and ending at verse 15. Now, exclude verses 13-15 and read verses 11-12 and 16, in that order, to begin to understand at least the continuation of the context. Then read verses 13-15! Let's examine each verse:

vs. 11—God judges all people by the same standard.

vs. 12—Those who do and those who do not know the law *have sinned!*

vs. 16—Shows *when* this judgment will occur and *what* God will judge—the *secrets* in men's minds. Secrets are obviously what no other man knows, and remain hidden until someone makes them known, and in this case God does!

vs. 13—The crux of the problem was that some thought that by merely *knowing* the law, they would be saved and were better than others who were ignorant of the law.

vs. 14—Some Gentiles were keeping *some* of the commandments better by “accident” than certain Jews who had known the law their entire lives. The conduct of some Gentiles made them a law in their own right.

vs. 15—These verses address the conscience. What Christians do with their consciences demonstrates, in a certain way, whether or not they will obey God's law in all points. Will they do what they are taught to *think* is right—apart from what they may know about God's law? In effect, their conscience either “excuses” or “accuses” them in everything that they say, do or think throughout their lives.

vs. 16—These are the “secrets,” hidden in all men's consciences, that God will judge.

A crucial point emerges from what we have learned. No human being will ever be able to stand before God and claim that he would have obeyed Him had he been called, because God will remind such a person of his or her “secrets”—sins perhaps known only to God and the person.

No suggested reading.

Romans 3:4-9

“God forbid: yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how

shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just. What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

Carefully read through these verses before proceeding to the explanation. This is a somewhat complicated, and sometimes rhetorical, passage:

vs. 4—This verse explains that God will never allow any man to “overcome” Him (God)—or any to feel “justified” because God is “wrong” in any matter.

vs. 5—A false teacher in Rome was spreading the idea that, the more that people sin (commit “unrighteousness”), the more God’s righteousness stands out (is “commended”). This is generally tied to the idea that God is then able to extend more mercy, and mercy glorifies Him. This illogical reasoning creates the question of “how can God punish people if their ongoing sinning glorifies His righteousness?” Paul concludes by saying rhetorically that he “speaks as a man”—not as God or any minister of God “would speak.”

vs. 6—How could God judge people as sinners if the end result of that sin was good, and glorified Him?

vs. 7—Paul had been accused of lying and of setting a sinful example. Of course, he did neither. (This verse must be read to understand the context.) In effect, Paul responded with, “If *this* (lying, which is a sin, but *supposedly* glorifies God) is the way God wants it, why would I be judged by God to have sinned?” The fruits of Paul’s work was greatly increasing and prospering. However, some were accusing him. Others had judged Paul a sinner.

vs. 8—This verse best reads: “*And not say right out* (as we be slanderously reported and some affirm that we say), ‘*Let us do evil that good may come whose damnation is just*’” (those who were accusing Paul). Paul said that he wished his accusers would stand up and just speak plainly what they were implying.

vs. 9—Here is the point: Did merely *having* God’s law make Jews better than the Gentiles who did not have it? Obviously, No! His Law must be KEPT, not just be known. In addition, Romans 2:11-12, 16 proves that all—Jew and Gentile—are under sin.

No suggested reading.

Romans 3:19-21

“Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”

Is verse 20 a license to set aside and disobey the Law of God, because by obeying it one cannot be justified, and thus righteousness is imputed “without the law” (vs. 21)? What does “under the law” mean?

Verse 20 actually speaks of being under the *penalty* of having broken the law, not of being under the need to keep it, because verse 19 speaks of “stopping mouths,” meaning that everyone is guilty of sin because of disobedience to the law—which must be in effect for sin to be possible. Verse 23 makes this point clear because it states that “*all* have sinned.”

Why can no person be justified by the works (or keeping) of the law? The answer is fundamental to Christianity: because with the law only comes the *knowledge* of what sin is (end of verse). Keeping the law can neither forgive nor save anyone. Only Christ’s death and His blood applied to Christians by faith can forgive them—can justify and reconcile them (Rom. 5:8-9)—but it is His Resurrection to eternal life that saves them (Rom. 5:10). However, the law certainly *can* tell us *what sin is!*

Verse 21 explains that *God’s* righteousness in Christians does not come via their human efforts to keep the law (as Israel tried to do). But it should be obvious that righteousness is of (or by) faith (vs. 27). No one can boast that he kept the law on his own power, thus claiming that God *owes* him salvation!

Conclude your study by reading verse 28 and then verse 31. It is faith that establishes the law! This is because it requires faith *from God*—the faith of Christ (Rev. 14:12), not mere human faith (discussed earlier)—to be able to keep it. Then, and only then, can anyone become truly righteous (Psa. 119:172).

Suggested reading:

- *What Does the New Testament Teach About Law and Grace?*
- *Just What Is Salvation?*

Romans 5:12, 19

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Does this passage state that all can be judged sinners because Adam alone sinned? Verse 12 does show that all human beings suffer death because of what this first man did. The key is the latter part of verse 12—“death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned*.” The end of verse 16 emphasizes that death comes not because of Adam’s sin alone, but because of “*many offences*” committed by *many* people, actually every person.

The Catholic doctrine of “original sin,” centered on these verses, teaches:

(1) Adam, not us, is really responsible for *our* sin, referred to as “original sin”!

(2) He passed on *his* sin in and through our flesh, which is now *inherently* wicked. Further, Catholics believe, however, that deep inside, all people are good, and secretly want to obey and love God. This idea derives from the pagan teaching that human beings have a pure, pristine immortal soul locked inside an evil “prisonhouse” body, only able to “escape” at death.

Romans 3:11 and 8:7 negate any supposed secret, noble motives lying inside a person’s “mind” and that these are able to somehow control the “flesh.” Paul did speak of a very real internal spiritual warfare going on daily inside Christians. Much of Romans 7 describes the daily battle of the Christian’s human mind at war against Christ’s mind within him.

No suggested reading.

Romans 5:13-15

“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many.”

What is “imputed sin”? What was the “similitude of Adam’s sin”? Of whom was he a “figure”?

First, imputed sin is sin that people are responsible for because they *knew* the law when they committed the sin (Rom. 4:15). People cannot sin or thus be guilty of sin *where there is no law*. Yet, Adam sinned, as did *all others* after him, including Cain (Gen. 4:7-8).

Second, the “similitude of Adam’s sin” was that it alone cut people off from the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:24). *No other sin in history ever did that!* This first human being’s choice, in real effect, spoke for all people who would follow. In this way, Adam was a “figure” of Christ because they both were *unique forerunners*.

On the one hand, Adam was the first person to make the wrong choice, thus cutting off all humans from the Tree of Life. On the other hand, Christ was the first to live a perfect life in harmony with God and the first to offer redemption to all people through the forgiveness of sins (vs. 18-19). In this way, both Adam and Christ affected the entire human race.

No suggested reading.

Romans 5:20

“Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

Does this passage state that God gave His Law so that would-be Christians better understand how to sin as much as possible? Of course not! (Also see Romans 3:4-9 explanation.)

God gave His Law so that people could see that sin was “abounding” all around (and in) them. The purpose of the Ten Commandments and the rest of God’s Law is to make it possible for people to see sin for what it is—in other words, to know what to avoid, not to know what they should do.

Some in Rome were becoming confused by false teachers and were asking, “Does God want His people, and eventually all people, to abound in sin so that He can glorify Himself by forgiving them?” Apparently, some were actually teaching this, and various brethren were wondering about it. Obviously, while some had actually found a way to be confused by this, the question should be seen as ridiculous. This said, wherever sin is widespread, more of God’s mercy is certainly required to remove its penalty.

Verse 21 explains that after mercy is extended, *then* righteousness reigns in sin’s stead. As explained in Romans 3:4-9, righteous-

ness does not “reign” by virtue of humans’ effort to do all in their *physical* power to keep the law!

No suggested reading.

Romans 7:1-3

“Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman which has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

Some refer to Romans 7:1-3, attempting to demonstrate that every marriage in every culture, and no matter its circumstances, is bound until death. Of course, this is true—when God *has* bound a couple.

This is not a difficult verse to understand. Recognize that Paul qualifies to whom he is speaking—“BRETHREN”—the converted Romans—stating, in effect, “What I’m about to say to you is said to people who *know* the Law, who understand the truth, who have God’s Spirit—who are true Christians.”

As with the woman at the well (recall this account in John 4:7-26, explained earlier), and the beheading of John the Baptist (this account in Matt. 14:1-4 was also explained earlier), people take Romans 7 out of context. Some forget the all-important qualifier, “For I speak to them that *know the law*.”

Let’s understand how God identifies those who are under judgment and those who are not. Notice what James wrote: “To him that *knows* to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin” (4:17)—and also what Paul recorded in Hebrews: “For if we sin willfully *after* that we have received the *knowledge* of the *truth*, there remains no more sacrifice for sins” (10:26). These passages, coupled with “judgment must begin at the *house of God*” (I Pet. 4:17), qualify Romans 7. However, Paul actually qualifies it *again* by using the terms “brethren” and “them that know the law.”

Therefore, this passage has no application to, nor does it reference, those who do not know either God’s truth or His laws of marriage. God is not entering into the marriages of this world.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

Romans 7:4

“Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Does this verse say that the law is *dead*—no longer in effect? This scripture trips up many people. It is helpful to recognize that the passage is actually an extension of the first three verses, covered in the previous explanation.

The point being made by Paul is that *people* become dead *to* the law—it is not the law that becomes dead. How does this happen? Notice Romans 6:2, 7 and 23 for illustration and comparison. These verses reveal that people, once converted, become dead *to sin*, and 6:7 shows that “he that is dead is *freed* from sin.” Verse 23 shows that this means freed from the *penalty* of sin—*death*!

Let’s now apply this to 7:4. Notice that it refers to “brethren.” Again, it must mean that the Roman *brethren* were dead to the *penalty of the law*, because BRETHREN are converted, sanctified people! Verse 6 shows that Christians are delivered from the law—its penalty—and have been freed from death. So, verse 7 concludes that the law is not sin, rather it shows people what sin is—the law points out sin.

This becomes the answer to those who read verse 6 and say, “God has delivered us from keeping that horrible law.”

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is Salvation?*
- *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?*

Romans 8:9

“But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

What does it mean to be “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit”? This passage represents what could be called the Christian “DNA test.” Everyone recognizes that one must have a man’s genes to be that man’s biological child. In a sense, God is the same. Without God’s Spirit, one cannot be His spiritually begotten child. But does one receive the Holy Spirit, God’s Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, or the “Spirit of Christ” at conversion?

We can understand more about the process of *spiritual* begetting by examining the actual process of *human* begetting. In reproduction, an egg must be fertilized by a sperm cell, which then “seals off” the egg. The egg can never be fertilized by another sperm.

Now consider. Romans 8:9 spoke of Christians receiving in the same begetting the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Are these two *different* Spirits—yet, Christ said, “I and My Father are One” (John 10:30)? If they *were* two different spirits, this still would not validate the trinity as some use this verse to suggest. It would mean there are *four*, not three, beings—God and *His* Spirit and Christ and *His* Spirit—in the Godhead.

Upon baptism and the laying on of hands (the point at which one receives the Holy Spirit), Christians are begotten by the Father, just as Christ was begotten in Mary’s womb by the Father. Once this has occurred, Christ lives in them (Gal. 2:20). At that point, they have the spirit of both Christ and the Father dwelling in them. These are one and the *same* Spirit. It is through this Spirit—the same as the Holy Spirit—that Christians take on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

It is important to recognize, however, that a Christian can literally “abort” in this lifetime—if he does not continue in the right path. The begotten child of God may also not come to term—be born again.

Grasp this! It is possible to lose the Holy Spirit, and bring the new begotten life to an end. Notice: “For it is impossible for those who were *once enlightened*, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were *made partakers of the Holy Spirit* [the same as the mind or Spirit of Christ], and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, *to renew them again unto repentance*; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6).

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *What Is True Conversion?*

Romans 9:16

“So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

What is this passage talking about? The subject is those whom God chooses to call!

A related question arises, however. May Christians do—or not do—anything that they wish because all that ultimately matters is

God's mercy? Is the passage saying that their "will" and how they conduct their lives—how they "run"—is not important or relevant to God?

Verse 15 reveals that God forgives and/or works with whomever He chooses. (Notice verses 12 to 14.)

Verse 16 is actually explaining that a person cannot have access to God now, or have His grace now, simply because the person either "wills" it, or is the more logical, and more humanly-qualified choice (is one who "runs" hard). The phrase "runs" is referring to those who work and do things *on their own* and, therefore, who might *seem* or *appear* to be natural choices for God to call. God's subjective mercy on some and not others is what makes the difference.

No suggested reading.

Romans 10:4

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes."

Does this passage declare that Christ brought the Law of God to an "end"?—made it no longer necessary to obey?

First, read Matthew 5:17-19. Careful reading shows that Romans 10:4 actually states that Christ is the end of the law "for righteousness" (or *as far as righteousness goes*). The Greek word *telos*, translated "end" here, means the "aim, purpose, goal, etc." (of the law). This same word is found in I Peter 1:9 and James 5:11, and both make the meaning of "end" very clear.

Take a moment to read from Romans 9:33 to 10:4 for context. Certain Roman brethren were trying to keep the law *without asking Christ* to keep it perfectly *through* them! An interesting last point to note is that *telos* literally means "a point aimed at." *Telescope, telephone, telegraph, and television* are all derived from *telos*. All of these are objects that take something that is distant and make them closer. Christ certainly did this to the law (Isa. 42:21)!

Suggested reading:

- *The Ten Commandments – "Nailed to the Cross" or Required for Salvation?*

Romans 10:9

"That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved."

Does this passage instruct and give an obligation to the Christian to continually “witness for Jesus”—to continually “confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus”?

Note that it says to “*confess*” Christ, not *profess* Him. A confession implies standing up and being counted when faced with persecution (Matt. 10:27-32). Remember, when under pressure, Peter *denied* Christ three times—he was unwilling to confess that he was a follower of Christ, a Christian.

Perhaps the most important passage on this subject is I Peter 3:15, which states that Christians should “be ready always to give an *answer* to every man that *asks* you a reason of the hope that is in you.” Answers are given to *questions*. Christians are careful not to ignore Christ’s admonition by “casting pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6). They should answer with their beliefs when ASKED or challenged about them—in other words, when *questioned*!

Suggested reading:

- *Should You Preach to Others?*
- *Just What Is Salvation?*

Romans 10:13

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Does this passage contain all there is to becoming a Christian—and to being saved? Does it mean that Christianity is merely “Just believe and you will be saved”? Understand that the idea of “just believe...” requires virtually an entire book to thoroughly explain this. The last three items below do.

First, notice Acts 4:12 to see that Romans 10:13 is instructing people to call on Jesus Christ *as opposed to anyone else*. At that time, the worship of every god and idol imaginable existed in Rome (I Cor. 8:5-7)! The point is that there is only one Savior, and typically the Roman citizenry believed the tradition of various other “saviors” for mankind.

Second, verse 12 shows that it does not make any difference to God who the person is that is calling out to Him. He will save Jew or Gentile! But is just calling on God enough? Read Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:7-9. These verses reveal that one must do as Christ says—not just believe on His Name. Matthew 7:21 removes all doubt! Christians have to obey God. Matthew 25:11-12 proves that simply saying, “Lord, Lord” is far from enough! To truly believe on the Name

of Christ is to accept His authority, meaning to observe all of His commands and instructions in their lives.

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is Salvation?*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*
- *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?*

Romans 11:17

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree.”

Who are the “olive trees” mentioned here?

Realize that Romans is written to a congregation of Gentiles. Gentiles are the “olive tree” that is “wild by nature” (vs. 24). Israel is the *natural* “branches...broken off” (vs. 17 and latter half of vs. 24). The context is that God can call Gentiles, even to the *exclusion* of Israelites who received the promises directly. But verse 20 explains that Gentiles should be humble, or they can also be broken off (vs. 21). The “mystery” here is explained in verse 25. Israel has largely been blinded in this age (God has called any number of physical Israelites), while God brings the initial number of Gentile callings to its “fullness.”

No suggested reading.

Romans 11:26

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Some teach that this scripture proves that everyone, even Satan and his demons, will be saved! This idea is generally referred to as the doctrine of *universal salvation*.

As a basis to build understanding, reread the Romans 10:13 explanation. Certainly it is *God's will* for all to be saved (II Pet. 3:9 and I Tim. 2:4). However, Revelation 22:15, 18-19 and Matthew 25:11, 30 and 34 plainly reveal that this will not happen. *Context* is the crucial key in Romans 11.

The Romans 11:17 explanation showed how Israel was broken off like branches from a tree. The emphasis in verse 26 is that Israel has a *Deliverer* (vs. 27), and that God *will* one day forgive them. Verses 31-32 show that God's overall intent is to have mercy on all

people and that this is why He waited—to the end that Israel might be able to see the *Gentiles achieve salvation* (vs. 31) and then desire it themselves.

Romans 9:1, 3-4 clarifies what Paul would have done, *if he* “could” have been permitted by God (vs. 3), but he understood that Israel’s—or anyone’s—salvation depends on their own, or his own, overcoming (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Israel’s time for salvation is largely yet to come.

Suggested reading:

- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*
- *Just What Is Salvation?*

Romans 14:1-8

“Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believes that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eats herbs. Let not him that eats despise him that eats not; and let not him which eats not judge him that eats: for God has received him. Who are you that judges another man’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks. For none of us live to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

Do verses 5 and 6 approve keeping *any* day as a day of rest? Is Sunday as good as Saturday for weekly observance? Do these verses allow individual Christians freedom of choice—so that no one can or will be offended by which day others choose? (The Restored Church of God has produced numerous books, booklets and articles, which clearly demonstrate the many proofs that exist regarding Saturday as the Sabbath. These go far beyond what is covered here.)

It is important to examine the text for precisely what it does and does *not* say. Verses 1 to 4 identify the overall subject in context as vegetarianism—not Sabbath-keeping or which day one selects for rest or worship. (Also see Hebrews 4:9 explanation.)

Verse 5 reveals that some were apparently choosing different days *to fast* or *not to fast*. It concludes by instructing Christians to decide *for* themselves, *by* themselves—instead of, as the RSV says, getting into “disputes over *opinions*” (vs. 1, latter part). God leaves some decisions in the hands of people—how long to pray, size of offerings, whether to have two, three or four children, etc.

The subject of the Sabbath is entirely different, however. God commanded the Sabbath, beginning in the book of Genesis. Ancient Israel kept it. Christ kept it. Paul kept it. The early New Testament Church kept it. And true Christians observe it today, because God never allows people to decide *what* to obey, only *whether* they will obey His commands (Deut. 30:19-20).

Suggested reading:

- *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*
- *The Sabbath – Has Time Been Lost?*
- *Why the Sabbath Command to Assemble?*

I Corinthians 1:21-23

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

What does the end of verse 21 mean (in italics)?

God enjoys (is “pleased”) in showing the “wise” of the world that He chose *fools* (vs. 27) to preach both His gospel (it is foolish to some!) and His Plan, which “saves them that believe.”

Also, what is the meaning of “sign” and “wisdom” in verse 22? The Jews often sought miracles (signs) for evidence of where God was working (just as the Pharisees sought from Jesus), while the Greeks were more concerned with this or that interesting philosophy (wisdom) as evidence of God or His presence.

What about verse 23? Why are *both* parts of this verse true? Jews tend to stumble because they want(ed) a *conquering* Messiah, not a *weak* Savior. The Greeks, however, thought that Christianity was foolish, because its founder claimed to be the Light and *Savior* of the world, but could not even *SAVE HIMSELF!* The Greeks as a people generally were interested in some kind of profound “wisdom” or impressive theory to espouse.

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 2:2

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

Is “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” the *only* topic that Christians should ever talk or think about?—the only thing that they should “know”? In an *overall* sense, yes! But this is not the whole picture.

In I Corinthians 1, Paul attacks the attitude of partisan, political spirits (vs. 10, 13), because the Corinthian congregation was shot full of this problem. I Corinthians 2:2 is a basic summary of how to deal with that attitude—point to Christ and His purpose for mankind, and His Return to earth. This overarches all other attitudes, subjects and positions. Notice Paul said that he practiced this approach when he was “*among you*”—among the Corinthians. Brethren today must also occasionally be brought back to the basics of Christianity! I Corinthians 1:1-10 is a block of verses that must be taken together to be understood. Notice how many times Christ’s name is mentioned. Read the whole chapter as a lead-in to this verse, focusing especially on verse 10.

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 5:6-8

“Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Does this passage disprove any need to *literally* keep the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Verse 6 condemns *leaven*. Some believe that this only means *spiritual* leaven, while others believe it means physical *and* spiritual leaven. Which is right?

Verse 8 is very emphatic and begins, “Therefore, let us *keep the feast...*” This refutes false claims about this verse. However, notice the next two phrases in verse 8: “...not with *old leaven* [physical leaven], neither with the leaven of *malice and wickedness* [spiritual leaven].” They are plainly told to “purge out” *old* leaven, and this can only mean out of their houses. Christians are to keep the Feast (Days)

of Unleavened Bread both physically *and* spiritually (notice the end of verse 8)!

Suggested reading:

- *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*
- *Bible Introduction Course Lesson 24 – The Days of Unleavened Bread*

I Corinthians 6:12-13

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”

Does this scripture teach that Christians do not have to keep any law or follow (any other) standards? Verses 9 to 11 show that Christians *do* have standards of conduct. Verse 9 plainly states that to be unrighteous is to *break the commandments* (Psa. 119:172). Verse 12 shows, however, that Christians do have certain “liberties” as they overcome the bad character of verses 9 to 11.

The word “expedient” comes from the Greek word *sumphero* meaning “to bear together, advantage, be better for.” Paul is saying that “Everything *within the law* is proper (lawful), but some things are better off not being done, because those who do them are not better for having done so. There was no advantage in doing them.” Other translations reveal this meaning. The concern can also become using liberty in a way that offends weak brothers.

Sleep, food, and alcohol are all lawful, but there are circumstances when using them would not be the “expedient” thing to do. Paul added (the conclusion to verse 12 could be verse 13) that he would not let things like *oversleeping*, *overeating*, or *overdrinking* rule him.

Though eating is not wrong, verse 13 explains that God will destroy *gluttons*! The key to understanding this passage is found in the end of verse 13. This passage is saying that “Sex is permissible, because God made the body, but its wrong use (fornication) is a sin.” This was a big Corinthian problem Paul had to address.

Remember, the first and great rule of Bible study is to start with the most basic scriptures on a subject and build from there.

Suggested reading:

- *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*

I Corinthians 7:1

“Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman.”

Catholics use this passage to support celibacy, particularly for priests. Is this what it is saying?

Recognize that Paul is *quoting from a letter* he had received. Notice that he said, “concerning the things you *wrote* unto me.” Paul was quoting the rumor that *they* had *written* to him. The Greek word translated “touch” means “to attach oneself in many implied relationships.” Now realize that fornication was absolutely rampant in the Gentile city of Corinth, and that this was having an effect in the Church. Seeing this, some were concluding that they should swing to the other ditch, and that no man should ever touch any woman for any reason.

Paul disagreed (vs. 2) and answered, “avoid fornication *by having your own wife*.” Also, “due benevolence” (vs. 3) means “sexual responsibility.” Paul was obviously not immediately contradicting himself, two verses later, by saying that all touching of women was wrong (vs. 1), but rather that men have a sexual responsibility to their wives (vs. 3).

Suggested reading:

- *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension*
- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*
- *You Can Build a Happy Marriage*
- *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?*

I Corinthians 7:8-12

“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: if any brother has a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.”

This passage represents some of the basis for the new “divorce and remarriage” understanding that Mr. Herbert Armstrong began to teach in 1974. Some of his critics still argue with these verses.

Verses 8, 10, and 12 each address different groups or categories of people within a congregation. The question becomes who are the “rest” in the third category, referred to in verse 12, unless they are people in marriages that are failing?—and what is the “bond(age),” which can be broken (vs. 15)? Consider: human beings can be either “married” (vs. 10) or “unmarried” (vs. 12). There are no other options.

The “rest” must be a category within these two conditions. Read verse 27, noticing that the only conclusion is that a man can be “loosed” in certain circumstances, *if he was bound*. Think for a moment. A person can only be loosed from something that *he was bound to*. This means that such a person can remarry and not sin (vs. 28)—he has been LOOSED!

The Church of God grew out of the understanding that the “loosing” (vs. 27) meant loosed from a wife who had a *previous* husband to whom she was *bound*.

So then, cited as an example of our old understanding, a wife would have never actually been *bound* to her *second* husband. Such a couple would merely separate—leave each other, but there could have been no actual “loosing” as such, that would have been necessary. In any event, the Church grew out of this understanding, and the booklet below explains the truth of when one can and cannot divorce and remarry.

Suggested reading:

- *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*

I Corinthians 8

“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. And if any man think that he knows any thing, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know...As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one...Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commends us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak...But when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience,

you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands..."

This chapter discusses the legality of Christians eating meat that was sacrificed by heathens to an idol.

Verse 7 explains that some weak Christians cannot separate the sacrilege done to such meat from the value of the meat as simple food. This could be likened to a new convert being unwilling to drive a secondhand car that a serial killer had once owned. His conscience causes him to believe the car is condemned, sinful or defiled.

Verse 8 holds two keys. First, people pull this passage from context by declaring that one can eat unclean meats *or* avoid them—that either position amounts to the same thing. However, the true overall intent is actually an important principle for all converted people to consider when with *weak brethren*. Christians should be careful not to do anything that may be a “liberty” (vs. 9)—recall the I Corinthians 6:12-13 explanation—but defiles the conscience of a weak bystander observing him practicing it. An example might be that of a newly baptized person who cannot yet drink liquor, because of prior mistaken belief that alcohol is wrong in any amount or form. Such a person may have to battle his conscience for a long time to *ever* be able to enjoy even one drink!

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 10:27

“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and you be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.”

Many feel that this passage indicates God changed His laws concerning unclean meats. At first glance, it does *seem* to say that there are situations in which eating them is acceptable—or even advisable. So, did the apostle Paul institute a change in God’s Law? The subject is not unclean meats.

To answer this question, we must reflect on the background of the Corinthians, whom Paul is addressing in this epistle. In ancient Greece, pagan temples were the site of continual sacrifices and offerings to idols. To the Corinthians, whom Paul was used to convert from paganism, this would have been a part of everyday existence.

After making a sacrifice, the one who brought the meat would usually be the one who ate it. However, every day there was a surplus of meat, which was left to the local pagan priesthood. The priests,

realizing that they could gain from this surplus, would then sell the leftover meat to local “shambles”—butcher shops. The public could then purchase the once-sacrificed meat for their personal consumption. This practice caused problems to develop.

The Corinthians had learned through Paul’s diligent teaching that they, as Christians and followers of the true God, were to abstain from pagan sacrifices and rituals (I Cor. 10:14-21). However, some wondered if eating meat purchased from the “shambles” would be a sin. They had no way of knowing if it had been sacrificed to an idol—nor could they be sure that the meat served to them by friends was not “defiled” in this way.

Notice I Corinthians 10:19. Paul is stating that the idol is just a thing made of wood and stone, and the meat is just meat. Verses 20 and 21 reveal that the sin would be involving oneself in the pagan sacrifice itself—that *this* ceremony was what was wrong, not the eating of such meat that went to a butcher shop.

Now let’s read verse 25: “Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.” Paul basically told the Corinthians to stop fretting and continue to consume meat sold in the local butcher shops. As long as the meat was clean (according to God’s dietary laws), it did not matter whether it had been offered to an idol. This also applied to the meals eaten in the homes of their friends—as long as the meat was clean, it was permissible to eat it.

The use of “whatsoever” in verses 25 and 27 does not imply that God was repealing His clean and unclean meats laws. Nor was Paul trying to do away with them. The context of this chapter clearly indicates that the issue involves the meat that was sacrificed to idols.

The subject of clean versus unclean meats is not the problem—nor is it even mentioned. Both Paul and the Corinthians would have been aware of and obeyed God’s dietary laws, as recorded in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. These laws are to be followed by all Christians through all ages.

But what did Paul mean by the phrase, “Ask no question for conscience sake”? Basically, this was a warning to the Corinthians not to ask the server of the meal where the meat came from. It did not matter, as he had told them—so what was the point in worrying about it? Besides, if the meat was proclaimed “tainted,” and the Christian proceeded to consume it, it might lead the host to feel that the Christian was compromising his beliefs, or endorsing idol worship. Of course, if someone stated that the meat was sacrificed to an idol, the

Christian should cease to eat it, so as not to lead others to believe that he thought idolatry was acceptable.

Again, the issue at hand was not clean and unclean meats, but the ingestion of clean meats offered or sacrificed to pagan idols.

Suggested reading:

- *Are All Animals Good Food?*

I Corinthians 11:1-16

“Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...”

Most Protestants believe this extensive passage means that women must cover their heads with a hat in church. This is very easily disproved, because the subject is plainly “hair” not hats (vs. 14-15). If the subject was *hats*, why does verse 6 mention “shorn” and “shaven” as acts of dishonor to women practicing them? The importance of long *hair* on women, not the wearing of hats, is the subject because hair not hats is shorn or shaven.

With the wrong explanation of this verse, a kind of duplicity becomes worse, particularly among women in the modern world. They often cut their hair extremely short, but deem it proper *as long as they wear a hat in church!*

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 11:25

“After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Many believe “as oft as you do it” means to take the bread and wine as often as *you choose*. Is this the case?

The proper explanation arises from verse 24, and is easy to understand. The Passover is a memorial, “a remembrance.” Memorials are observed on an *annual* basis. Verse 26 refers to “the Lord’s death,” which occurred *on Passover* (Christ is “our Passover” – I Cor. 5:7). The Passover is *always* observed only once a year.

Also, verse 28 shows that the Passover ceremony is preceded by personal examination. This could not logically be done every day or even every week.

Suggested reading:

- *Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*

I Corinthians 15:29

“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?”

This passage represents a central teaching of the Mormon Church, which feels that the phrase “baptized for the dead” means that each convert has an ongoing obligation to be baptized for every deceased relative that he or she can identify. This leads Mormons to meticulously research and comb their genealogy, so that all their relatives can be “saved” by “substitute” baptism. While utterly ridiculous and contrary to the entire plan of salvation, incredibly, millions believe it.

This verse actually means that all Christians “are baptized for the *hope* that the dead are later resurrected.” Colossians 3:3 explains that a Christian’s life is “hid(den) with Christ in baptism” (also Rom. 6:3-6). Hebrews 6:17-19 shows that the *resurrection* is the hope that Christians have as an “anchor of the soul.” Colossians 1:18 states that Christ was the firstborn from the dead—*this* was His hope!

In I Corinthians 15, heresy (vs. 12) was occurring. Some were saying that there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul proves this to be wrong and *this* is the context of the whole passage. In other words, he asks, “What about the dead who died *with hope* of the resurrection, if there is no such thing?”

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 15:51

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

Does this passage teach that human beings possess immortal souls that *sleep* upon death—often referred to as “soul sleep”?

Ezekiel 18:4 and 20 state directly that souls can “die.” Notice that I Corinthians 15:51 does not say anything about souls. However, it is true that death is certainly *like* sleep, in that Christians awaken in the resurrection *as though no time had passed* since their last consciousness. Also notice I Thessalonians 4:15-16, which states that

the dead rise first at Christ's Return. "Sleeping" is also mentioned in this parallel chapter. Reference to sleep is an analogy, not a fact pertaining to supposed souls within people. In a host of verses, the plain Bible teaching is that the dead are dead.

No suggested reading.

I Corinthians 16:1-3

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do you. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever you shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem."

This passage is the generally recognized authority for passing the "collection plate" every Sunday as the central means of funding for the "church." Does it represent a *general* command to *all* Christians, for *all* time, to give freewill offerings at "*Sunday services*"? If not, what is the account describing?

The offering described is unique in FIVE separate ways, and it will be clear that it has nothing to do with "passing the plate" at weekly local services:

(1) It is a *specific offering* (Romans 15:25-28 references the same offering).

(2) It was to be given to a specific *people* (see Romans 15:26; I Corinthians 16:3).

(3) It was done at a specific *time* (when Paul passed through).

(4) It was given at a specific *place* ("let everyone of you *lay by him* in store"). This is because Paul would come later (vs. 3—"when I come") to gather what the brethren had been individually saving *at home* ("lay by him").

(5) This command is entirely specific to the *Corinthians* (vs. 1). It should be clear that it is not a command for Sunday collections, but merely instruction to local brethren to store an important offering. It was to help *poor brethren in Jerusalem*—and was not for the ministry, or for the administration of the church, or for "missionary work" around the world, or for any other purpose than that described!

Finally, this letter was received in Corinth during the Days of Unleavened Bread. "First day of the week" should correctly be translated "first of the weeks (plural)." The collection was almost certainly to happen immediately after the Days of Unleavened Bread, in

the first *week* counting toward Pentecost. It was not instruction to give on Sunday, the first day in the weekly cycle, as another means of validating Sunday-keeping.

No suggested reading.

II Corinthians 2:15-16

“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

What do the phrases “death unto death” and “life unto life” mean? Verse 16 refers to verse 15. “Perish” means the *process* of “perishing.” Consider: Christians appear to the world (“those that are perishing”) to be worshipping a *dead* leader (Christ), which in their mind leads to a dead way of life. Also, those perishing are *dead* in sins now, which could ultimately lead to the second *death* later, if they do not eventually come to repentance and receive forgiveness.

On the contrary, true Christians, those who are in the process of being saved, appear to be: (1) Leading an abundant *life* now in route to eternal *life* later, and (2) serving a *living* Christ who has already received eternal *life* and resides in heaven.

To all who view them, true Christians always *appear* to be one or the other.

No suggested reading.

II Corinthians 3:9

“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”

What are the “ministration of condemnation” and the “ministration of righteousness”?

Take a moment to read the entire chapter and then notice verse 11. It shows the latter (ad)ministration is more glorious than the earlier (ad)ministration (of condemnation). The *ministration of condemnation* is the *ministration of death* (vs. 7) of the Old Testament, when people either died for their sins (death is the ultimate condemnation) or paid severe penalties.

The *ministration of righteousness* represents the New Testament period, when people can be forgiven and cleansed by Christ's righteousness. From this point forward, people could now be helped to live righteously because the Holy Spirit is available, making this

possible. Verse 13 mentions Moses' veil, which he wore in the presence of the Israelites. This was a symbol, which showed that the ministration of death was all that Israel could understand—because their understanding was veiled. The future terms of the New Testament were veiled (blinded) from Israel's mind (vs. 14). This veil was a type of the wall in Israel's collective mind to the understanding that Christ would die, for their sins and the sins of the world, at His first coming.

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is Salvation?*

II Corinthians 5:1-8

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Be sure to read this entire passage before the explanation.

Paul is speaking of being “at home in the body” and “absent from the Lord” (vs. 6), and then “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (vs. 8). This scripture is similar in principle to Philippians 1:23-24, explained later.

Does verse 8 prove that going to heaven is the reward Paul was looking forward to at death? Was Paul's immortal soul waiting to be “absent from his body” in order to join Christ (“the Lord”) in heaven? It is critical to notice that Paul said nothing of *when* and *where* he would be with Christ! Nothing in the text implies that this would happen *immediately*. Verse 2 references how Christians “groan” to one day become spirit with God. *This* is what Paul sought above all things.

All of I Corinthians 15 explains that Christians have two bodies: One is physical (the first body). The other is a spirit body (at the

resurrection). Paul was speaking of this spirit body, which comes later at the resurrection. This entire chapter becomes the context of II Corinthians 5:1-8.

Verse 4 is the key to the entire passage! Our physical bodies are a type of “clothing” and when Christians are dead they are, in a sense, *unclothed*! Paul recognized this and, because he did not merely want to die (and “be unclothed”), he put the emphasis on having “mortality [death] be swallowed up of life”—eternal life!

Verse 7 reveals that Christians walk in faith in this life looking to salvation, while Hebrews 11:13 reveals that they see salvation “afar off”—not something that occurs immediately upon death. The verses disproving the immortal soul concept (Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 10:28; etc.) also apply to verse 8.

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*
- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

II Corinthians 6:1-2

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain. (For He says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”

Does verse 2 state that *now* is the only time in which salvation is offered to mankind? It is almost universally believed and taught that “the day of salvation” mentioned here means that everyone alive today is getting his “chance” for salvation now.

The word “*the*” in verse 2 is actually mistranslated as the *definite* article, but the original Greek reads “*a* day of salvation,” the *indefinite* article.

The world is not facing a “now or never” ultimatum from God, with missionaries desperately trying to “get the masses saved.” The world is now blind—deceived (Rev. 12:9). On the other hand, though God’s Church has often been accused of teaching that people get “*two* chances” for salvation, it has never taught this. All people get one chance for salvation. We have always understood that learning and knowing the truth is what brings accountability (Jms. 4:17; Heb. 10:26).

Isaiah 49:1-8 mentions this same phrase and includes the indefinite article “*a*” when describing the prophesied salvation of Israel.

Suggested reading:

- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*
- *What Is True Conversion?*

II Corinthians 10:13-16

“But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God has distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand.”

Paul speaks of a kind of “rule” (vs. 13) and “line” (vs. 16) here. What is he referring to?

The subject in context is the New Testament ministry. The margin shows that these two words come from the same Greek word *kanon*, from which comes the familiar word *canonize*. The Greek word for “measure” (vs. 13) is *metron*. We get the word *meter* from it and it means a *certain width*. This becomes more interesting because *kanon* is also a reference to the famous Isthmian Games track meet of that time. (This was similar to our modern Olympics.)

In these races, each runner had a lane, “line” or “rule,” in which he ran a certain distance or measure. Consequently, Paul could use this term knowing that Corinth would then easily understand and conclude that he had the authority (“rule”) to correct them, so that they would not be “out of bounds” spiritually. The context (vs. 7-16) reveals this more plainly. The point is that the apostle Paul was telling the brethren in Corinth that he had the authority to make them “toe the line.”

The world’s churches have and employ little or no actual government over their members. This passage simply reveals that there is government in the true Church of God.

No suggested reading.

II Corinthians 12:1-7

“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen

years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

This account in scripture raises the question of whether Paul visited heaven during his lifetime. Is this what he is describing?

Notice some of the text with certain emphasis and clarifying words added: “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory, I will come to *visions* and *revelations* of the Lord. I knew [know] a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such an one caught up to the THIRD HEAVEN. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (vs. 4).

This question arises: Does verse 4 prove that Paul went to heaven, because “he was caught up into paradise,” and that heaven is also *our* reward? The Bible does reveal that paradise *is* near God’s throne in the third heaven: “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life...in the midst of the *paradise of God*” (Rev. 2:7).

There is no doubt that this account does refer to Paul himself and no one else. He uses the pronoun “I” fourteen times.

It is also clear that this event was a “vision”—a “revelation”—from God. Verse 1 mentions “I will come to VISIONS and REVELATIONS of the Lord.” In verse 7, Paul added, “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the REVELATIONS, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

Verse 2 shows that Paul’s experience was so real to him that he could not discern if it was a vision or something that really hap-

pened! The word “knew,” in verse 2, should be translated “know.” Again, Paul was obviously speaking of himself. This is not written in past tense, as though he was speaking of having once known someone else to whom the account pertained.

In verse 3, Paul repeats his uncertainty for emphasis. Understand! In no way does this represent Paul’s future in heaven! Remember, Paul could not have literally gone to heaven, because Christ said, “No man has ascended up to heaven, but...the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

This unusual experience was given to Paul for an extraordinary reason—so that he would have the special strength to endure all that he would be required to suffer over the course of his ministry. In the previous chapter, 11:23-33, Paul describes the terrible and seemingly endless trials and persecution that he experienced. His ability to endure all these difficulties required special encouragement from God. This was why Paul was allowed to see his future glory in the resurrection—when he will actually *receive* salvation.

Verses 5-6 show that Paul described himself indirectly so that people would not think too highly of him. He realized that people could begin to view him as an exalted person, merely because of what had been the vision God had shown him. This is why he said what he said. Notice again: “Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me.”

Paul remained humble by “glorying in his infirmities.” Yet, he received great inspiration from this extraordinary vision to press on through the rest of his difficult ministry. This account has nothing to do with Paul having been to heaven during his lifetime.

No suggested reading.

II Corinthians 12:16

“But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.”

How could Paul, a Christian, use guile (craft or trickery) to gain advantage or prove a point to others?

The most likely explanations are: (1) He was possibly quoting something that the Corinthians had been saying, or (2) he was being *sarcastic* because he might have been previously accused of this (re-

call chapter 10 and notice that he *defends* his office in 12:11), or (3) there are times when a deeply converted person, one who knows their *true motives*, could employ godly psychology to “win souls” (Prov. 11:30)—or to point out the error of another person.

An example of the latter is Nathan the prophet using psychology to help David see the evil that he had done to Uriah the Hittite (II Sam. 12:1-9). Also, when it is properly understood, the entire book of Philemon is seen to be a detailed study in *converted psychology* used by Paul to win Philemon.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 2:4

“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.”

What is the “liberty...in Christ Jesus” referenced here?

Those who believe that the Law of God was done away by Christ’s sacrifice believe that the “bondage” spoken of here is the keeping of the Ten Commandments—and the “liberty” is freedom from keeping them.

First, read Matthew 5:17-19 and James 2:8-12. James states that God’s law is a *royal law* (vs. 8), and verse 12 calls it a “*law of LIBERTY.*” Also see Romans 7:12 and 14, Micah 4:2, Deuteronomy 5:29 (which uses the words “*always*” and “*forever*”), Romans 13:8 and 10 and I John 5:3, among many others. Finally, notice Acts 15:1-2, which shows that some were teaching the need for obedience to the law of *Moses*, not the Ten Commandments, which is the Law of *God*. Note the reference to the “*book of the law,*” in the Galatians 3:10 explanation, regarding circumcision, washings, sacrifices, etc. Also consider rereading the I Corinthians 6:12 explanation. In addition, Hebrews 2:14-15 explains that the *bondage* pertaining to the law is bondage to the DEATH PENALTY for all who break it and who do not repent.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 2:11

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.”

Why was Peter “to be blamed” by Paul? What had he done?

It is interesting as a side note that Peter, with whatever was the

wrong attitude that he demonstrated, was not a very good “Pope.” (Remember, Catholics teach that he was the first Pope—Matthew 16:18 explanation—and no one among the Catholic hierarchy would dare blame the Pope publicly for anything.)

In Galatia, certain Jews wanted to see the Mosaic “book of the law” taught in this region inhabited largely by *Gentiles*. The Jews thought that keeping this law made them more righteous than the Gentiles (see Gal. 2:4 explanation).

This contention polarized and split these two groups! This was so serious that some of the apostles had become polarized into one “camp” or the other—rather than combating the problem. Verses 12-13 show that Peter (a Jew) and Barnabas sided with the Jews (vs. 14), but Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, saw this and rebuked Peter openly (vs. 14-21)! Verse 12 shows that certain Jewish converts of James appeared on the scene while Peter was sitting with Gentiles. Seeing them, Peter removed himself from the Gentiles for fear of what the Jews (the “circumcision”) might think.

Verse 13 shows that Peter actually was part of causing the division to grow worse, until Paul asked (paraphrasing vs. 14), “How can you who have the liberty the Gentiles have, being a Jew yourself, turn around and tell Gentiles they should give up their liberty (from the Mosaic law) and live like the Jews (who keep it)?” This explains what was really the hypocrisy that Paul was addressing.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 2:16

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Does this scripture say that Christians should not attempt to keep God’s law because law—commandment—keeping cannot save anyone? This is the first of several usually-misunderstood passages in Galatians supposedly teaching that the Ten Commandments are no longer in effect.

Notice that the scripture actually says, “the works of the law *cannot justify us*.” Grasp this all-important point. The living Christ never condones sin. He is always willing to forgive it, but then commands, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). Notice that Gala-

tians 2:17 asks, “is...Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” Now read Romans 2:13, which states that Christians must be “doers of the law to be justified,” and Romans 3:20, which seems to contradict, “by the...law...there shall no flesh be justified.” Either Paul contradicted himself in successive chapters or *both statements* are true!

Galatians 2:16 states that Christians are justified “by the faith of Christ...” Since Christians must be *doers* of the law to be justified by Christ (Rom. 2:13), it becomes clear why James recorded that faith and works go together (2:18).

Let’s make this even more clear. If men were saved by keeping the law, then they would be able to brag to God that they had earned salvation (Eph. 2:8-10). Ephesians 2:10 states that Christians are “created...unto good works,” while verse 9 shows that these works have no power to *save* anyone. Christians keep the law—but that cannot pay for a single *past* sin (Rom. 6:17-18)! People are justified by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) and saved by His life (recall Romans 5:10), but Christ will not justify anyone who continues to disobey Him!

No suggested reading.

Galatians 3:10-12

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that does them shall live in them.”

As with so many other passages in Galatians that are twisted out of context, this is another much-quoted scripture attempting to disprove commandment keeping. The verses cited in the Galatians 2:16 explanation are all equally applicable in explaining how faith (vs. 11) and works (vs. 10) are inseparable! I Timothy. 1:18-19 helps explain James 2:18, because it shows that the conscience must be rid of guilt, or faith will be shipwrecked!

Christians demonstrate their faith in God by keeping His law and it requires faith in Christ’s power at work in the person for him to succeed. For example, it takes faith to give a tithe of one’s income with pressing bills on hand—it takes faith to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days when one could be ridiculed or lose

employment as a result—it takes faith to resist surgery or medical treatment that may be prescribed, in certain circumstances, because one believes that God will heal!

Ultimately, it takes the greatest faith for Christians to believe that God will resurrect their bodies at Christ's Return. Think of it this way: Since all Christians will be dead, they would never know if God broke His promise, and that they never "awoke" into His kingdom (I Thes. 4:14-15).

Realize that the book of Galatians almost invariably is referring to the "*book of the law*" (vs. 10, 12, 17-19)—physical sacrifices, washings, etc., that Old Testament Israel was required to keep—but that New Testament Israel (the Church – Rev. 12) is not.

Finally, the passage contains two confusing phrases that summarize the confusion of most: "Cursed is everyone who continues not in *all* things...in the book of the law" and, again referencing the law, "The man that does them shall live in them." What do these mean? Simply that, if one is going to ignore the role of faith and return to the physical ceremonies as certain Jews were teaching the Galatians to do, that person had better keep "all things" in Moses' law—in other words, he had better fully "live in them." But this still would not save him.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 3:13

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree."

Does this scripture declare that law keeping puts one under a *curse*? The question is best summarized as this: From what did Christ redeem us—the law itself, or the "*curse of the law*"?

The law's curse is its *penalty of death* (Rom. 6:23). The laws in society against rape, murder, kidnapping, armed robbery, and other offences are not curses. But everyone would agree that the penalties for breaking them—from fines, to jail, to long prison terms, to execution for capital offenses—certainly *are* a curse!

Christ was made a "*curse for us*," not because He kept the law perfectly *for us*, but because *He suffered the death penalty FOR us* (Heb. 2:9-10; John 3:16)! Law keeping is not a curse—but the *penalty* for sin certainly is.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 3:18-19

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serve the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

This passage is also used to show that obedience to the commandments do not bring salvation—(eternal) “inheritance.” So some were asking, “wherefore then serve the law?”—or what is the point of keeping the Ten Commandments?

Verse 19 holds the key to understanding the text because it shows Christians how to deduce *which law* is being discussed. Notice that the law described is one that was “*added*” to something “*because of transgressions*.”

What is a *transgression*? I John 3:4 states that “sin is the transgression of the law.” Since people can only sin (transgress) when *law is present* (Rom. 4:15), then there must have *already been a law* in place to have *another law* added to it! Of course, the reason for this was that the ancient Israelites were sinning as do any normal human beings and, like children, needed a “schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24), a governor or babysitter (Gal. 4:2) until they could conduct themselves as adults!

Verse 19 explains that the book of the law, which some were still urging the Galatians to keep, was only a law to be kept “*till* the seed [Christ] should come.” Finally, verse 21 states, “Is the [book of] the law then against the promises [Plan] of God?” The answer is, of course, no. But observing the *book* of the law cannot justify or give anyone righteousness.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 4:9-10

“But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years.”

Many have asserted that this passage condemns the keeping of the Holy Days and the Sabbath? Is this what it means?

Protestants teach that the Galatians were returning to these practices. This is impossible! I repeat: The Galatians were Gentiles and had never kept any of God’s Sabbaths—annual or weekly—or had

even heard of the true God before their calling. Grasp this. They could not return to what they had never known!

Also, read Leviticus 19:26, Isaiah 1:13-14 and Deuteronomy 18:9-10 to see that God strongly condemned keeping various “days” and “times”! These were humanly-devised “sabbaths” and “holy days,” actually like today’s many familiar holidays—and this very word derives from “holy days.” Leviticus 23 reveals that God wants *HIS* Sabbaths kept! At the same time, He consistently condemned the *wrong* days and man-made “sabbaths” of the above-referenced verses.

Nowhere did God ever command the observance of any *months*. Colossians 2:8 and 20-22 explain that the “weak and beggarly elements” (referenced there) are philosophical forms of *will-worship* and *self-denial*, devised by men and commonly found in certain parts of the world. The word “rudiments” (Col. 2:8) is the same word translated “elements” in Galatians.

No suggested reading.

Galatians 4:21-31

“Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which engenders to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bears not; break forth and cry, you that travails not; for the desolate has many more children than she which has a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what says the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

I have chosen to include the entire passage for aid in studying it. What do these 11 verses refer to—and mean? The context is somewhat difficult to understand, so a verse-by-verse approach is best:

vs. 21—The reference to *law* means the “book of law,” and “hear” means to “fully understand.”

vs. 22—The bondmaid (Hagar) bore Ishmael (a type of the world). Notice verse 24 to see this.

vs. 23—Isaac was a son promised by God and truly a “miracle baby” (Rom. 4:16-21; Gen. 17:1-6). Ishmael was born entirely of human effort, by Abraham and Hagar, without involvement of faith.

vs. 24—The two covenants mentioned here represent the Old Covenant and the New Testament, respectively. The Old Covenant was a study in human effort alone, which always leads to a continuing in *bondage* to sin. The New Testament included promises that were given requiring belief through the faith of Christ found in His followers. It is this kind of belief that leads to freedom from the penalty of sin.

vs. 25—The world is in bondage to: (1) sin, (2) the frustration of doing things by human effort alone, and (3) the ways, customs, and traditions of society.

vs. 26—The reference to Jerusalem is to the New Testament Church (which is our mother—see Hebrews 12:22-23 and Revelation 12).

vs. 27—More people are in bondage in today’s world than are spiritually free, so Christians ought to rejoice that our mother—the Church—is not barren and *does* have children. The “desolate” are the world, and it has “many more children” than does the Church, the “*she* which has an *husband* [God].”

vs. 28—Self-explanatory.

vs. 29—The world hates true Christians today, just as the Arabs (Ishmael) hate Jews (born of Sarah and Isaac).

vs. 30—Ultimately, the Church will be saved in advance of the world, which now hates and persecutes it.

vs. 31—The New Testament Church.

Suggested reading:

- *Where Is God's Church?*
- *America and Britain in Prophecy*

Ephesians 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Does this passage teach that Christians receive all their “spiritual blessings” later, after they “go to heaven”?

The problem is a mistranslation. The verse should properly conclude with "...all spiritual blessings which are *enjoyed in heaven* in Christ." Malachi 3:9-10 explains that God blesses those who obey him *today* with the ability to enjoy the same excitement and thrills that He enjoys spiritually *now*! Recognize that spiritual blessings almost invariably precede physical blessings, anyway. If this happened the other way around, it would probably destroy Christians—prosperity would choke them, leaving them with little need to seek God for their daily needs, and for protection and guidance.

Also, Psalm 16:11 reveals Christians will one day in the kingdom of God only then truly experience "*fullness of joy*" as well as "*pleasures for evermore*" after receiving salvation. It was this part of salvation to which Paul referred—to *these* "blessings [enjoyed] in heavenly places."

No suggested reading.

Ephesians 1:5

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

Are Christians God's "adopted" sons, or will they be *real* sons after the resurrection? Does it matter?

The concept of adoption by God represents a subtle counterfeit to God's Master Plan. Satan wants Christians to believe that they are only going to be *artificially* added by God to an already complete Family and family Name.

The popular belief and idea of a closed, *completed* Godhead—the trinity—does not allow for more sons of God beyond Jesus Christ. However, Colossians 1:18 and Romans 8:29 plainly state that Christ is the *firstborn* of *many* brethren who are to follow later into the family *by the same process* of conversion, begetting, spiritual growth and resurrection from the dead (John 3:3-6).

Christians are *not* adopted children, but are sons as legitimate as Christ Himself. This is because every child of God is begotten by the same Spiritual Father (Matt. 3:17). Christians are in every sense *real* sons—in a *real* Family—named of God. Romans 8:23 contains the same mistranslation found in Ephesians 1:5. The phrase "adoption of sons" comes from the Greek word *huiiothesia*, and should be correctly translated "spirit of sonship."

Suggested reading:

- *The Awesome Potential of Man*

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

How are Christians “saved by *grace through faith* and *not of works*”? Does this passage say that works play no part in the life of a Christian?

For this to be true, then even faith cannot be “worked up.” Otherwise, faith would be a human work supplied by the Christian, meaning that God would then owe him salvation by works and not by “gift.” The end of verse 8 shows that Christians’ faith is given as a free *gift*. It is not a faith “of ourselves,” as is shown in the explanations for Galatians 3:10-11 and 3:18-19. All these explanations help explain Ephesians 2:8-9, but Galatians 2:16 is particularly helpful.

The word *grace* means *unmerited pardon* (or forgiveness). Christians neither earn nor deserve such mercy and help from God, yet receive it anyway. It takes godly faith to believe in this forgiveness. When truly understood, Galatians 2:16 and 3:21-22 explain a remarkable principle. Consider that “we believe *in Christ*”—that He *is* the Christ. But Galatians 2:16 shows that “we are justified by the faith *of Christ*”—by *His* actual faith living in us as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). In other words, Christ even supplies the faith to believe that we will be justified (forgiven) and saved.

Protestants overlook verse 10, which qualifies verses 8 and 9. It explains that “good works” (*Christ’s* works in the Christian) ARE still a fundamental requirement. These works, though, can never be the by-product of human effort alone. If so, each Christian could come before God boasting that he was owed salvation!

Suggested reading:

- *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?*

Ephesians 2:14-15

“For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”

What was the “middle wall of partition” that existed between Jews and Gentiles, which was “broken down”? Was it the *law* that was “abolished”? Let’s carefully examine this almost universally misunderstood passage phrase-by-phrase:

(1) Jesus Christ is “*our* [Jew and Gentile] peace...” (vs. 14).

(2) “...who hath made *both* (Jew and Gentile) *one* (people).”

(3) “having abolished...the *enmity* [the *hatred* between peoples was abolished, not the *law*]” (vs. 15).

(4) The word “*even*” (vs. 15) is in italics. This means it is a manmade addition, thought by the 1611 translators to be helpful in making the passage more easily understood. It actually confuses the reader and the passage is best rendered “*due to* the law of commandments.”

(5) Similarly, the word “contained” is in italics and this word is best rendered “*interpreted* in ordinances,” or talmudic traditions.

See Mark 7:7 and Colossians 2:20-22 for reference. Recognize that “ordinances” derives from the Greek *dogmasine*—from which comes the English word *dogma*. These dogmas, or ordinances, were the Pharisaical “do’s and don’ts” recorded and *still found in the Jewish Talmud!* Sixty-five of these traditions pertained to just the Sabbath day alone and how Jewish leaders—who did not have God’s Spirit!—decided that it was to be observed!

What Christ abolished was the *hatred*—“enmity”—between Jews and Gentiles due to these awful, self-righteous laws. It was this approach that made the Jews believe and teach that they were superior to Gentiles.

No suggested reading.

Ephesians 4:8

“Wherefore he says, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Does this passage mean that Christ takes His servants “captive” in order to “lead” them to heaven? How exactly does Christ lead “CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE”?

First, Catholics believe that this scripture refers to LIMBUS PATRI—meaning the place of *limbo* occupied by the *fathers* (Old Testament figures like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Samuel, etc.). They teach that these men were captives trapped in a place of *salvation limbo* before Christ “ascended” to heaven and made it possible for them to finally join Him there. In this way, Christ supposedly led “captivity (the Old Testament fathers) captive” to Himself.

Do you see that it is foolish—even silly—to think of men trapped in captivity in a kind of vague “neverland” or prison for thousands of years until Christ could “free” them?

The real meaning of the verse is that those who serve sin are *captive to it* and are its *servant* or *slave* (Rom. 6:16-19), until repentance and conversion. Christ ascended to heaven to become the High Priest of God's people (Heb. 4:14-16) and to intercede for them before the Father so that they can receive necessary, regular *forgiveness* of sins and be offered salvation—and the gift of God's Holy Spirit to even begin their conversion (Phil. 2:6; II Cor. 13:5). At begettal, Christians literally become *captives of Christ* and servants (slaves) of righteousness. He then holds all claim over their lives (I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Rom. 12:1-2).

Ephesians 4:8 is about conversion, not salvation. Romans 6:17-18 states, "But God be thanked, that you WERE the *servants of sin*, but you have obeyed from the heart...Being then made *free from sin*, you became the *servants of righteousness*." When this occurs, one is no longer captive to sin and Satan (II Tim. 2:25-26)!

Suggested reading:

- *What Does the New Testament Teach About Law and Grace?*
- *Just What Is Salvation?*

Ephesians 6:4

"And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

How does a parent apply this instruction? How are the terms "provoke," "nurture," and "admonition" to be applied?

Colossians 3:21 teaches that provoking a child can also discourage the child as well as cause different reactions, depending on the particular child. This nearly worst of all parental mistakes can be done by teasing, belittling, criticizing, or any kind of *wrong* correction, such as consistently being too strict. This explanation best fits in Ephesians, because it goes on to say, "*but* bring them up in the *nurture* (gentle, patient instruction) and *admonition* (correction, punishment) of the Lord."

Many modern parents either do not punish *at all* or do it as a *last resort*—out of frustration or anger. If not done in measure—with wisdom and obvious love involved—punishment can cause hatred to well up in the child. Such children will often await the day that they can retaliate against parents, or simply leave the home forever.

Of course, provoking *anyone* is un-Christian, foolish and wrong. Just as never correcting children will lead to disaster, over-correcting, to the point of provoking them, can be especially disastrous be-

cause they could wind up in jail or with other terrible social difficulties. These children will often become very permissive parents or, ironically, could themselves go on to become abusive parents.

Suggested reading:

- *Train Your Children God's Way*

Philippians 1:23-24

“For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Was Paul saying that he wished to die and immediately go to heaven? As with II Corinthians 5:1-8, be careful of assumptions!

II Timothy 4:6-8 shows that Paul knew that he would have his reward “at that day” and at “His (Christ’s) appearing,” rather than at death. Notice: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love *His appearing*.”

When is “that day”? Revelation 22:12 states, “behold, I come quickly; and *My reward is with Me*, to give every man...” (also I Thes. 4:16-17; I Cor. 15:52; Dan. 12:2-3). As we have seen, and so much of our literature carefully explains, Christians do not “die and go to heaven.” They wait (in the grave) for Christ to return to earth bringing “His reward with Him.”

Paul knew that the dead who “sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (Dan. 12:2). He also understood Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, 10 and Psalm 146:4. These verses show that when a person dies, his thoughts perish, and he is unaware of the passing of time—“for the dead know not anything.” Paul recognized that his next waking moment would be in the resurrection, and that it would seem as though it had happened immediately upon death, not almost 2,000 years later.

Suggested reading:

- *What Does “Born Again” Mean?*

Philippians 2:27

“For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.”

What does “sorrow upon sorrow” mean?

Verse 25 shows that the “he” of verse 27 was Epaphroditus, a man beloved by the Philippian Church (vs. 26 shows he did not want the Philippians to grieve) and one who ministered greatly to Paul (vs. 25). The sorrow that Paul did not want to have was that of this man’s death. However, God spared Epaphroditus, and therefore Paul from sorrow (vs. 27). This sadness would have been on top of Paul’s already-existing sorrow—that he was in prison at this time (Phil. 1:13, 4:22).

No suggested reading.

Philippians 3:20

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Does this passage prove that the dead converse in a strange, new, truer “conversation,” and that they are in heaven?

The word “conversation” derives from the Greek word *politeuma* and should be properly translated *citizenship*. The word *politics* also comes from this word.

This fascinating scripture reveals that a Christian’s “citizenship” is held in heaven (I Peter 3:4, referenced earlier that it is reserved there). These passages explain why Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). This is because it is of, or belongs to, another place—HEAVEN!

Christians are ambassadors for another government (II Cor. 5:20) and citizens of the kingdom of God. This is why they do not participate in man’s systems of government. Their citizenship derives from and is held by a different authority—heaven—GOD!

Christians’ citizenship comes *FROM* heaven by the authority of God *IN* heaven. Recall that Revelation 22:12 shows that Christ brings each man’s reward with Him! Philippians 3:21 shows that it is speaking of the resurrection (I Cor. 15; John 5:25-29), when our bodies shall be changed. Verse 20 is not referring to conversation, but rather to citizenship.

Matthew 6:19-23 explains that Christians can store eternal reward in heaven. The analogy is that a Christian’s citizenship is held in heaven for him *where no one can destroy it* (“neither moth nor rust doth corrupt”).

Philippians 3:20 uses the phrase “*FROM* where” in describing Christ’s Return. He comes here—*from* there—with His reward, not the other way around!

Suggested reading:

- *Should Christians Vote?*
- *War, Killing and the Military*

Colossians 2:16-17

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

Does this scripture state that nobody has authority to tell Christians that they are right or wrong in regards to unclean meats, Holy Day observance, and Sabbath observance? This passage is quoted by nearly every Protestant and Catholic authority to prove this thinking.

The point: Christians should not let *people* arbitrarily judge what they should or should not do. Only the Church (Col. 1:18)—“the body of Christ” (vs. 17)—can do this. (Also see Ephesians 1:22-23.) The word “*is*” is in italics and translators blurred the meaning by adding it.

The phrase “in meat or drink” (vs. 16) is correctly translated “for eating or drinking.” Some ascetics in Colossae were teaching that self-denial and will-worship (vs. 20-22) were God’s way (see the Galatians 4:9 explanation).

Notice that the first phrase in verse 17 uses the present tense in reference to the Sabbath and the Holy Days. It says, in effect, “these days are [not *were*] a [fore] shadow of *things to come*.” Christians know that the Sabbath and Holy Days picture the Plan of God, which certainly does involve many “things to come.” Verse 18 is a final warning to Christians to not allow anyone to trick them about these important issues, because it is only the Church—the BODY OF CHRIST—that carried authority to make judgments before the brethren (vs. 17, end).

No suggested reading.

I Thessalonians 1:3

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”

What is meant by these three phrases: (1) “*work of faith*, (2) *labor of love*, and (3) *patience of hope*”? Let’s examine each:

(1) Faith certainly involves work because God gives it so that we can *do* things for Him. Real faith—the active faith of Christ within

His servants—is not inert belief. It is *active* and is a *force* bringing strength to *do works*. Faith without works is dead (Jms. 2:17-18).

(2) Labor of love is mentioned, because love is not just a *feeling*. It is an *active* approach to keeping the commandments (which are “love,” as explained in I John 5:3 and Rom. 13:10). Christians *exercise* love, not merely *feel* it. As was once stated, “It is better to burn out than to rust out.” Love means work and serving!

(3) What about “patience of hope”? *Patience* means “to bear up under” duress. Hope is very easy as long as Christians are assured that their hope is near. What about when they realize that the hope they look toward may be twenty years away—what about fifty years? What happens when problems, trials, temptations and suffering stand between them and achieving their hope? Doubts can arise and weaken hope. This is why hope must be accompanied by enormous *patience* (see the Luke 21:19 admonition for the end time). I Thessalonians 1:3 underscores how every word of God is important!

No suggested reading.

I Thessalonians 5:7

“For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.”

To whom does this “drunken”ess and “sleep” refer? Also, what is the “night” referring to?

Romans 11:7-8 reveals that this verse primarily refers to the nation of Israel. Matthew 13:10-17 explains that the world is now blinded and asleep—which are related terms! Matthew 25 describes the final era of God’s Church—the Laodiceans—who fall into this condition. While I Thessalonians 5:7 uses an analogy, it perfectly pictures a world that, at this point, can neither understand God’s Plan nor respond to it. The “night” pictured here is primarily the fact “that men loved darkness to hide and cloak their evil deeds” (John 3:19; 8:12; Eph 6:12; Matt. 4:16; 6:23; among others). Beginning with Adam and Eve, the world has chosen to be drunk and asleep, and to live a “night” existence.

This passage is also a powerful warning to every true Christian that he or she should be careful not to fall asleep, to dull the senses by drink—literal or otherwise—or to allow darkness to cover his attitude—all of which are *practices of the world!* Ask: How keenly perceptive can one be about himself, his life, his calling or his salvation, if he is either sleeping, in a drunken stupor or in a pitch-black room?

Suggested reading:

- *America and Britain in Prophecy*

I Thessalonians 5:23

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Again, the question arises: Do people, and therefore Christians, possess an immortal soul?

First read the Matthew 10:28 explanation of how the soul and body are different. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*. It means “spirit, breath, current, breeze.” *Pneumonia* comes from it, literally meaning a disease of breathing. Here, it refers to the *spirit in man*, which all human beings possess.

This spirit in man is *not* a soul. See Job 32:8, Luke 23:46, I Corinthians 6:20, Numbers 27:16 and Ecclesiastes 12:7. I Corinthians 2:11 explains the *function* of the human spirit and how it works differently than God’s Holy Spirit.

Before explaining the meaning of “soul,” realize that, by this scripture alone, it must be different from the spirit in man or else Paul was being redundant! *Psuche* is the Greek word for “soul,” and can be translated “drive, energy, breath, life, vitality.” It is best translated here as *life*.

Soma, the Greek word for “body,” means “body or carcass.” This word is accurately translated.

The *soul* refers to the ETERNAL LIFE residing within the Christian, because his life is “hid with Christ” (Col. 3:3) or “*preserved blameless*.”

Suggested reading:

- *What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind*

II Thessalonians 2:6-7

“And now you know what withholds that He might be revealed in His time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only He who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

This awkwardly-phrased KJV translation requires help to be clear. It is actually a prophecy concerning the false, universal Babylonian religious system that has dominated Christendom for 2,000 years and has always sought to enter and destroy God’s Church. God’s Spirit literally “withheld” this system from, at that time, crush-

ing the young New Testament Church (vs. 6) that Christ was raising up through Paul and the other apostles.

The “he” of verse 6 is the final, end-time *man of sin* (vs. 3), referred to in the book of Revelation as the false prophet. To suit His Plan, God did not want this man revealed too early, even though the system that he will lead (vs. 7) has long been active and caused tremendous harm to the world and, periodically, to Christ’s Church.

The end of verse 7 is better translated, “only He [God through the Holy Spirit] who now restrains will, until he [the man of sin] come up out of the midst.” The man of sin comes—and this will happen soon in our age—“out of the midst” (after 2,000 years and after the apostasy) of the false system of this world’s churches. This individual and his partner, a European-based superdictator will be destroyed by Christ’s coming (vs. 8).

Suggested reading:

- *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?*

I Timothy 1:9

“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.”

Do the “righteous” need to concern themselves with commandment keeping? Does this verse exempt them from a law that others must keep?

This scripture appears to say that the law is only for the “unrighteous.” But verse 8 states, “the law *is good*, if a man use it lawfully”—if he does not use it to strive about picky opinions or questions. Of course, only righteous men (Psa. 119:172) would already be keeping the commandments, anyway. In effect, the law is not necessary to point out for them what they are *already doing*, and in this way was not “made for” the righteous. Far from being “off the hook,” the righteous are ahead of the curve, so to speak, because they are already seeking to obey God.

To paraphrase Paul, “be careful how you use the law—use it lawfully and properly in the way that you ask questions about it, because the *unrighteous* misuse it and disobey it.” Hence, it is “made” for them—to point out to *them* their faults.

Suggested reading:

• *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*

I Timothy 2:15

“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”

What does the passage mean when saying that women are “saved in childbearing”?

There are two meanings: (1) The Greek actually means “*the* childbearing,” and this refers to the birth of Christ, whose crucifixion saves Christians, including all women, and (2) if a woman performs as a strong Christian wife and mother, including her role as teacher of God’s future sons and daughters, she will be saved. The end of the passage makes this clear.

Suggested reading:

- *Train Your Children God’s Way*
- *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?*
- *You Can Build a Happy Marriage*

I Timothy 4:1-5

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

Can “every creature” that God made be eaten for food as long as those who do this are “thankful” (vs. 4)?

Three points clarify this verse:

First, Paul is combating vegetarianism (avoidance of *all* meat). He is not indicting people promoting avoidance of *unclean* meat. The passage states “abstain” from meats. This scripture explains the fact that meat (within God’s guidelines) is not a sin to eat.

Second, the Word of God, however, must “sanctify” (set apart) any particular meat. The Bible only sanctifies the *clean* meats of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14! This leads to...

Third, verse 3 explains that Christians can thankfully receive

meat only if they “believe and know the *truth*.” John 17:17 declares, “Your word is truth.” The Bible is our only acceptable standard for the truth, and this includes meats that are acceptable to God.

It is important to note Paul records here that abstaining from meats and forbidding to marry are “doctrines of demons.” An interesting side point is that certain clean meats provide crucial proteins for the proper development and strength of the brain, and thus the mind, so that it can resist demons. It is not strange demons would inspire the idea of vegetarianism.

Also—the other subject here—when fully understood, the teaching of celibacy for *any* reason is utterly satanic, because human marriage represents the very God-given pattern of His Plan to expand His family.

Suggested reading:

- *Are All Animals Good Food?*
- *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension*
- *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*

I Timothy 5:9

“Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.”

Who is Paul referring to regarding widows “taken into the number”?

The entire context of verses 3 to 9 is important. It is about which women are eligible for third tithe assistance (vs. 3-8). Verse 9 can also be translated, “Let not a widow be enrolled on the list [same as ‘taken into the number’] *under age sixty*, having been the wife of one man (of course, this means one man at a time).” This guideline may have been laid out because of a particular duress Paul felt that the Church was experiencing at that time.

Suggested reading:

- *End All Your Financial Worries*
- *The Other Tithing Questions*

I Timothy 6:10

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Often quoted, does this verse teach that *money* is the root of all evil?

This is not what the verse says! A closer look exposes two crucial, overlooked points: (1) It is the “love of” money that is (2) “a” root of all evil, not *the* root of all evil. The Greek article for “*the* root” is more properly translated “*a* root.” (Remember, the Greek language has no *definite* article.) To *love* money is both covetous and idolatrous. This is why Paul instructs that having it brings great *potential* for many “sorrows,” *if* one is not very careful.

Therefore, God is not condemning the right and proper use of money, but rather the *love* of it.

Suggested reading:

- *Taking Charge of Your Finances*

II Timothy 1:6, 14

“Wherefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands...That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.”

What was the “gift of God,” which entered Timothy, probably at ordination, through the laying on of Paul’s hands?

Since Paul did not baptize Timothy, he was almost certainly speaking of ordination, which may have brought additional gifts from the Holy Spirit already present from conversion. Verse 14 reveals that God’s Spirit was capable of keeping this gift (“that good thing”) intact. Most likely, the gift seems to have been either a special ability to speak, as an evangelist, or perhaps a special faith that Timothy needed to carry out his ministry.

No suggested reading.

II Timothy 2:6

“The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits.”

Who is “the husbandman that labors”?

This passage applies to any true minister whose labor—in this case, his formal work or job—is that of a *full-time servant* in the Church. Such ministers are always to be the *first* partakers of the fruits. The fruits are the tithes and offerings of God’s people. When tithes arrive, the ministry is cared for first.

Suggested reading:

- *End All Your Financial Worries*

Hebrews 4:9

“There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.”

What is the “rest” referred to here that “remains...to the people of God”? The answer becomes the plain New Testament command for God’s people to continue Sabbath observance instead of falling into the popular tradition of Sunday-keeping.

The Greek word rendered here as “rest” is incorrectly translated. It is confused with the *other* “rest” found in Hebrews 3:11; 4:1, 3, 4 and 8, which derives from a different word. In these other verses, the word translated “rest” is *katapausis*, which literally means to “rest”—as in the *millennial rest*!

In 4:9, however, the original word is actually *Hebrew*, with a Greek suffix attached! The Hebrew word is *sabbat*, and it can *only* mean the Hebrew Sabbath! The Greeks had *no equivalent word*, so the fact that Paul used the Hebrew could only have been for the purpose of referring to the seventh-day Sabbath. Paul added *ismos* (a Greek suffix) to *sabbat* (forming the word *Sabbatismos*) because *ismos* means “a keeping of” or “a doing of.”

Grasp this! What has been demonstrated here is plain instruction that God’s people today must still keep His Sabbath—“*There remains therefore a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God.*” The marginal rendering states this directly.

This scripture is a clear New Testament **COMMAND** to Christians that they must keep the weekly Sabbath rest *now*, in order to enter the millennial rest *later*! The context reveals that this is something that Israel had always been unwilling to continue. Paul warns Christians to carefully avoid Israel’s pattern of departing from God’s Law and obedience to His Sabbath command!

Suggested reading:

- *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*
- *The Sabbath – Has Time Been Lost?*
- *How to Make the Sabbath a Delight*

Hebrews 6:20; 7:4, 11, 14, 17

“Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek...Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils...If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further

need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?...For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood...For he testifies, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Who or what is the true identity of Melchizedek (also see the Genesis 14:18 explanation)?

The answer is *Jesus Christ*. As you read the explanation of each verse, ask how anyone could possibly think that it refers to anyone else:

(1) The word “Melchizedek” means “king of righteousness.”

(2) The phrase “after the order of” means *with the rank of* (6:20). This begins to reveal Christ, who would then have not just been “on the order of” or merely *like* Melchizedek. It means that Christ had the same rank.

(3) Hebrews 7:1 shows Melchizedek to be the “King of Salem” or King of the city of Salem (Jerusalem), which means City of Peace (vs. 2). See Isaiah 9:6 for absolute proof that this is Christ, there called the “Prince of Peace.”

(4) Only God can receive tithes (vs. 2, 4)—and, of course, Christ is God (John 1:1, 14).

(5) Only God (vs. 3) has no beginning or end of days. Though they have no *end* of days, even angels have a *beginning* of days. So they are ruled out.

(6) Melchizedek was *like to* the Son of God, who was Christ (vs. 3).

(7) Hebrews 4:15 shows that Christ is the High Priest of all who follow Him, and Melchizedek is still a priest “forever” (vs. 3). No one else is still a priest.

(8) Melchizedek returned as this priest, through Judah, and could only have been Christ (vs. 5-6, 14).

Suggested reading:

- *End All Your Financial Worries*
- *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*

Hebrews 7:18-19

“For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near unto God.”

Has God's law been "disannulled," because it could not make its adherents "perfect"? If this is true, is it because it could never help anyone anyway—"the law made nothing perfect" (vs. 19)?

The *law* spoken of here (vs. 16; 9:10; 10:1-6, 11) is the Mosaic *book* of the law. It can be "set aside" (not disannulled) so that God can use it later, in the millennium, and this will occur.

Understand! The law of God is not the subject here! The physical, Aaronic priesthood is. This has always been part of the law of Moses, *not the law of God!* The book of the law could make no one perfect (verses above in chapters 9 and 10). The biggest reason that the book of Hebrews was written was to show Christians that it is *Christ's* blood (not that of bulls and goats) that makes them perfect, that justifies them.

No suggested reading.

Hebrews 8:6-8

"But now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, He says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

This question arises: Did God in the Old Testament show "poor judgment" in making the Old Covenant and, therefore, have to replace it with the New Testament?

One simple, overlooked key clarifies this supposedly confusing verse. Notice that the *covenant* itself was not faulty, the *people* were. The plain meaning of verse 8 is "finding fault with *them*"—the people! God created a "better covenant" . . . *testament*, in order to write His law *in peoples' hearts* (vs. 10)—to bring spiritual conversion and change in a way that physical Israel never experienced (vs. 11).

So often, careful reading is all that is necessary to understand a "difficult" passage.

No suggested reading.

Hebrews 12:17

"For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. Why could this man not repent? Did this happen to him because some human beings are not permitted to change—to *repent*?

Repent means *change*, and change always involves a *change of mind*. Even though Esau was sorry, once he traded away his birthright, it was too late to *change his mind* or “repent” of his decision. The margin makes this clear by substituting “place of repentance” with “way to change his mind.”

Sin is different—the willing person can always turn from his transgression. But the person who overdrinks, wrecks his car and paralyzes himself has no such later choice. Some choices cannot be undone.

No suggested reading.

Hebrews 12:22-23

“But you are come unto...the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Does this passage teach that immortal souls of “just men made perfect” are in heaven?

The Bible *does* teach that Christ, the Father, many angels and the *spirits* of men are in heaven! We saw that God’s Word plainly says that there is a spirit in every person—but, as we have seen, this is not an immortal soul. Once again, humans do not have immortal souls—reread Genesis 2:7, Ezekiel 18:4 and 20, Matthew 10:28, Romans 6:23, and other verses.

When a converted man dies, God returns his human spirit to Himself. Through this spirit—within it—He has preserved a complete, detailed record of all that pertained to that person’s life. This is the plain teaching of scripture. Notice: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God *your whole spirit* and soul and body be *preserved blameless...*” (I Thes. 5:23). The verse referenced here has been explained. The spirit, soul and body represent all that was the person. The personality, experiences, accumulated knowledge and character of each human being is stored in the human spirit. This is why it returns to God at death.

Now notice these passages: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and *the spirit* shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). And Ecclesiastes 3:21 states, “Who knows the *spirit of man* that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to

the earth?” Certainly, it is very few who know that there is a spirit in man that returns to God at death.

Stephen understood. As he was being martyred for preaching a powerful sermon, the Bible records, “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, *receive MY SPIRIT*. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell *ASLEEP*” (Acts 7:59-60). Stephen fell asleep (died) knowing that God would receive his spirit and that it would reunite with him at the resurrection.

Hebrews 12:22-23 reveals that the God “of the spirits of all flesh” (Num. 27:16), of all “just men made perfect,” keeps all these spirits with Him.

In conclusion, the “spirits of just men made perfect” are human spirits containing the stored character, knowledge, personality and experience of every person who has ever lived, with the spirits of converted people—those who had God’s Spirit—awaiting the resurrection. Heaven—the “heavenly Jerusalem”—is where the spirits of all God’s saints from the last 6,000 years are held—*preserved* intact—awaiting the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thes. 5:23). The subject of man’s spirit is large, and the first booklet below thoroughly explains what it is.

Suggested reading:

- *What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind*
- *Just What Is Salvation?*

I Peter 1:4

“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Referenced earlier, does this passage say that Christians receive their reward in heaven?

Notice, once again, the word *reserved*. The Christian’s reward is *reserved in heaven* for him, only to be revealed (i.e., salvation) “in the last time” (vs. 5). As stated, all Christians, in effect, hold sure “reservations” for a future event. Peter says nothing about going to heaven to either obtain this reward or to stay there—only that the reward is *reserved there* until the “last time,” when Christ returns. In this way, a Christian’s reward can remain “incorruptible,” “undefiled,” and “unable to fade.”

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*

I Peter 3:19-20

“By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

Are these “spirits in prison” evil *people* who “went to hell” that Christ “preached to” during the three days and three nights He was supposed to be in the grave? This view is easily and properly corrected by using these keys:

(1) The preaching occurred “*when* once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah”—*not during Christ’s 72-hour period of death!*

(2) The word translated “prison” is not eternal hellfire somewhere under the earth where the “damned” are roasting. Rather, it is the Greek word *phulake*, which means “a place of restraint or prison.” That place is earth—to where Satan and his demons (Luke 10:18, 20 “spirits”) have been cast down.

During some of the 120 years of Noah’s preaching—the Bible does not say for how long—Christ simultaneously preached to the *fallen* angels who followed Satan. II Peter 2:4-5 is a helpful reference, because the word translated *hell* there is really the Greek word *tartaroo*, which has been explained earlier in this book.

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*

I Peter 4:6

“For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.”

Some feel that this verse validates the claim that the dead are alive somewhere else, for example, in “heaven” or in an “ever-burning hell.”

To understand this verse, it is vital to know who the “dead” are that Peter was speaking about. By the time this epistle was written, in A.D. 67-69, many thousands of Christians had already received the knowledge of God’s laws, as preached by the apostles, and were living their lives according to those laws. With the passing of time, some of these faithful followers had died in the faith, with others through history martyred by pagan leaders and religious figures.

King Solomon wrote, “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward... Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go” (Ecc. 9:5, 10). Those who are physically dead know nothing—and are unable to receive any preaching or communications.

Since the dead know nothing, those who were “dead” had received the gospel while they were still alive!

But there is another way that the gospel is preached unto the “dead.” In the Bible, those that have not repented of their sins—their transgressions not forgiven by God—are sometimes referred to as “dead” (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13).

These are “dead” in their iniquity. They have not received the gift of Christ’s sacrifice, nor God’s Holy Spirit—the “earnest” or down payment of salvation—yet. Christ’s statement to a young man, “Let the dead bury their dead...” (Luke 9:60), was a direct reference to those who could not understand spiritual matters—those still under the death penalty. The apostle Paul further explains that they are “...dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Although still physically alive, by not hearing the words of life—the gospel of the kingdom of God—they are spiritually dead! Christ explains: “It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Today, God’s true Church has been commissioned to preach this same gospel to the world “as a witness unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14). However, most people do not heed this message, nor is God calling them at this time (John 6:44). Thus, they remain in ignorance and sin—enslaved under the death penalty—now understood to be what is the true curse of the law!

Suggested reading:

- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*
- *Is There Life After Death?*
- *Which Is the True Gospel?*
- *The Truth About Hell*

II Peter 3:10

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

Was Peter, as some suppose, referring to the future complete annihilation of the earth?

Although verse 10 begins by citing “the day of the Lord,” it uses this event as the opening benchmark in time which unleashes a long series of end-time events culminating in what was mentioned in verse 7. Of course, verse 7 establishes the context of what Peter was focusing upon: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” This is the time of the judgment and destruction of incorrigible and unrepentant sinners that remain on the earth (Matt. 3:12). It also is the culminating event (Rev. 20:13-15) in God’s Plan of Salvation to occur just before the New Heavens and the New Earth discussed in the two final chapters of Revelation.

It is understood that an extensive series of events take place from the time of the “day of the Lord” until the culminating event of the lake of fire which engulfs the earth. Revelation chapter 20 lists this series of intervening events to occur after the “day of the Lord.” The first of these crucial junctures involves the putting away of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3). Next is the establishment of the kingdom of God on Earth for one thousand years (verses 4-6). This is followed by Satan’s final rebellion at the end of the Millennium and his being thrown into the same lake of fire where the beast and false prophet were previously cast (verses 7-10). The next benchmark event is the general resurrection referred to as the Great White Throne judgment (verses 11-12). (Many mistakenly think of this 100-year time of judgment—see Isaiah 65:20-21—as merely the resurrected masses standing in line for “sentencing.”) Only after these events listed in Revelation 20 comes the time of the fire mentioned by Peter.

The lake of fire (Rev. 20:13-15) will destroy or refine all physical components of earth, as Peter describes: “...and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” It is called “unquenchable” in Matthew 3:12 because it cannot be “put out”—it will burn and continue to “purge” until there is no fuel left for it to consume. All remaining life forms and physical remnants left on the earth’s surface, and in its atmosphere, will be either consumed or refined in this fire. Spirit beings will survive this purging process, since they are not affected by physical fire.

In verse 6, Peter compares this cleansing fire to the flood in Noah’s time that was also used by God to rid the earth of sin. And just

as with the flood, the planet itself will not be destroyed by this fire, but simply “wiped clean.” The earth will continue to exist (Ecc. 1:4), but in a renewed form.

Continuing in verse 13: “...we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” This is confirmed in Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea,” right after the account of the lake of fire (20:14-15).

Peter then is simply describing, in II Peter 3:10, the cleansing action of the “lake of fire.” The earth’s surface and atmosphere, and everything physical in it, including the unrepentant, will be permanently destroyed. God then will “renew” the earth’s surface in preparation to receive Him and His Family: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (See Revelation 21:2-3, also the rest of chapter 21, as well as chapter 22).

Suggested reading:

- *God’s Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*
- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*

I John 4:1-3

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

What is the meaning of “try the spirits”?

The historic context holds the key. In the first century, a group known as the *Gnostics* held to a certain philosophy. They believed that Christ did not come as a physical, fleshly person, but rather only as a spirit—an apparition—a phantom! Over time, gnostic thinking took hold and began to flourish in the Church.

Of course, this idea is patently false. But John was forced to combat it, as the first-century Church was going into apostasy and

giving way to influence from the bigger, more visible and popular, universal church centered at Rome. A helpful inference comes with a better translation. Starting with the middle of the verse, it should say, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is coming in flesh is not of God...”

When the issue here is fully understood, it is seen to be part of the doctrine of antichrist. The following vital understanding emerges from this error: If Christ did not come in the flesh, then He could not have been tempted by, and thus could not have overcome, the flesh *that he did not have*. Besides negating Christ’s role as High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), Christians are left believing they do not have to follow Christ’s example of overcoming because this is not possible to do. He did not need to overcome anything. Perhaps more than any other single point, it is this idea that has given birth to the idea that Christians need not strive to keep the Law of God—the Ten Commandments. After all, why should one try to observe a law that only Christ was able to observe, and this because He was not composed of flesh. In the end, God’s plan of building the very character of Christ and God is overthrown!

Understand. Christ came in the flesh! And, since His resurrection, Christ is sending his Spirit into Christians, *to relive His righteous life through them*. Properly understanding this point is vital to explaining *any* spirit not of God!

Suggested reading:

- *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!*
- *Where Is God’s Church?*
- *Here Is The Restored Church of God*

I John 5:7-8

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

At first glance, this passage appears to *directly prove* the trinity. Could this scripture be revealing that the God of the Bible is three persons in one being? Was it inspired by God so that mankind would understand who and what He is?

Here are the plain facts of this verse: Transcribers who believed in the trinity concept—but who could find no scriptural support—

added the bold italicized words to support their beliefs. They are pure human invention! Those who use these verses to support the trinity doctrine are either unaware that the passage was altered, or they *are* aware but feel that their use serves a “greater good.”

Most Bible margins directly state the truth of the passage. For example, the New King James Version margin reads this way: “NU, M [versions] omit the rest of v. 7 [after “record”] and through *on earth* of v. 8, a passage found in Greek in only four or five very late mss. [manuscripts].”

The *Critical and Experimental Commentary* says of this section that the verse was not found in the Latin Vulgate until the eighth century. The *New Interpreter's Bible* states, “This verse in the KJV is to be rejected...It appears in no ancient Greek MS [manuscript].”

Here is what *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, written by an avowed trinitarian, states, “But it is likely that this verse is not genuine. It is wanting [missing] in every MS. [manuscript] of this epistle written before the invention of printing, one excepted, the Codex Montifortii, in Trinity College, Dublin: the others which omit this verse amount to one hundred and twelve.”

Clarke continues, “It is wanting in both the *Syriac*, all the *Arabic*, *Ethiopic*, the *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Armenian*, *Slavonian*, etc., in a word, in all the ancient versions but the *Vulgate*; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct MSS. have it not. It is wanting also in all the Greek fathers; and in most even of the Latin.”

These verses should properly read, “There are three that *bear record*: the SPIRIT, and the WATER, and the BLOOD: and these three agree as one.”

We must then ask: What is the meaning of “three that bear record”? To “bear record” or “bear witness” is to *attest* or *testify* to something. When a witness testifies in a courtroom, he is telling “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Therefore, these *three elements of the conversion process* “attest” to the fact that a person is indeed a Christian.

This works in the following way:

(1) SPIRIT: Romans 8:16-17 states, “The SPIRIT ITSELF *bears witness* with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” Verse 9 continues, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that

the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

It is by the *receiving* of the Holy Spirit that one is begotten by the Father. With this Spirit then dwelling in the mind, a person can begin to understand God’s Word and His Plan: “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so *the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God*” (I Cor. 2:11).

(2) WATER: The death and burial symbolized by WATER baptism, preceding true conversion, is the means by which Christians show God their willingness to live a new life, to “put off...the old man” (Eph. 4:22; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:4-6) and walk “in newness of life.” It also demonstrates faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

(3) BLOOD: It is the BLOOD of Christ that cleanses people from their past sins (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12) upon repentance and baptism.

So, does I John 5:7-8 teach the doctrine of the trinity? Rhetorically, we could say that it might—*if it belonged in the Bible!* Actually, most of verse 7 and half of verse 8 did not begin to appear in any manuscripts until A.D. 800! The italicized passage is simply not part of Scripture, and there is no other verse similar to it that is. The Bible does not teach the trinity doctrine! Men added this passage to promote the long-existing, false, pagan concept of the supposed three-in-one nature of God.

Suggested reading:

- *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*
- *What Do You Mean Water Baptism?*
- *What is True Conversion?*

I John 5:16-17

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

What is the difference between “sin unto death” and “sins *not* unto death”? Do these verses teach the Catholic doctrine that categorizes sin into *venial* and *mortal*?

Romans 6:23 shows that, until repentance, *all* sin brings the death penalty, and this is the key here. Since Christians are never to judge others, what does this passage mean?

Basically, if, to all observers, a sin is obviously unrepented of, to the point that the offending person no longer has any desire to either believe or serve God, or be in His Church, then it is a sin unto death, and it is not to be prayed for by others. Such a person no longer has any interest in repenting or overcoming sin. Short of that truly awful condition, Christians should pray for other Christians involved in sin. This includes enemies, who have left the Church but who may *think* that they are still serving God (Matt. 5:44).

Suggested reading:

- *Just What Is “The Unpardonable Sin”?*

Jude 6

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

Does this scripture prove that there are fallen angels “bound in hell”? (See I Peter 3:19-20 explanation.)

The Greek word, *aidios*, translated “everlasting,” is more properly translated “age-lasting.” This event is fulfilled during the Millennium, when Satan and his demons are cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2-3). The book of Revelation states that these angels are “bound a thousand years”—and with “chains” (Jude 6). After this “age-lasting” period, these spirits will be cast into “outer darkness forever” (Jude 13). No wonder God’s Word teaches Christians will “judge angels” (I Cor. 6:3).

No suggested reading.

Revelation 5:8-10

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, you are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed *us* [them] to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made *us* [them] unto our God kings and priests: and we [they] shall reign on the earth.”

Who are these heavenly 24 elders?

Some believe that the 24 elders are taken from all the saved human beings supposedly now in heaven. This teaching comes from a mistranslation of the italicized words. These words should be replaced by the words in brackets. See the Revised Standard Version,

and also the margin of the New King James Version, which both render them correctly.

When all the many scriptures about angels are put together, it becomes obvious that these elders are spirit beings created by God to be His counselors. They were probably created before the physical creation, along with the cherubim (Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer—who became Satan—are the only three mentioned by name in the Bible), the seraphim, the four living creatures and the billions of other angels that serve God.

It is *impossible* that the 24 elders are resurrected saints. Christ stated, “And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). Only when Christ returns to earth will Christians be given immortality (I Cor. 15:23; Rom. 2:7)!

The 24 elders rule with God *in heaven* and have an obvious advisory role (they are “elders”) to Him. The resurrected saints will rule *on the earth* (Rev. 20:4; Matt. 5:5; Dan. 7:27).

Suggested reading:

- *Angels – God’s Ministering Spirits*
- *Who Is the Devil?*

Revelation 6:9-11

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

Who are the “souls under the altar” in this heavenly picture?

Some cite these verses to validate both the immortal soul doctrine and that the saved go to heaven. First, recognize that this description is not literal, but rather is symbolic, as is much of the book of Revelation. Then notice the four horses (of the apocalypse) described earlier in this same chapter. No one believes that these horses are literal, but rather that they are symbolic and part of a *VISION* seen by the apostle John. A consistent standard must be used, without randomly picking and choosing which should be considered literal and which should be considered a vision.

In vision, John saw before him a book or scroll sealed with seven seals. As Christ opened each seal (Rev. 5:5), John was shown a preview of a future event (“hereafter” [4:1]). Since John was “in the spirit” as the seals were opened (vs. 2), the events he witnessed were not actually occurring when he saw them. They were *heavenly previews* of things that would happen later *on Earth*. Recognizing this is absolutely crucial for proper understanding.

Upon opening the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9), John “saw under [at the base of] the altar the souls of them that were slain.” In Matthew 24:9-28, Christ had shown the meaning of the seven seals. He explained that the fifth seal symbolizes the coming Great Tribulation, which will occur *on Earth*.

In the vision, John was shown the future, with a long period of martyrdom having taken place (up to and through the Middle Ages), and a later one (the Great Tribulation) that is yet to happen in our time. The souls who were “slain” (martyred Christians throughout the ages) were told (vs. 11) to “rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

All lukewarm, but still true, Christians will have to suffer this martyrdom (Rev. 3:14-22). Those who have previously died will continue to “rest” (remain “asleep” in their graves—Eph. 5:14; I Cor. 11:30) until others are also martyred.

The “souls” (dead saints) crying “avenge our blood” (vs. 10) is akin to Abel’s blood (his life—note Lev. 17:14) crying to God from the earth (Gen. 4:10). Obviously, since neither blood nor the dead talk (Psa. 115:17; Ecc. 9:5, 10), the meaning must be symbolic, not literal. Therefore, the “souls under the altar” represents a future martyrdom of lukewarm saints.

Suggested reading:

- *Revelation Explained at Last!*
- *Promised Protection – Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?*
- *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?*
- *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!*
- *Where Is God’s Church?*

Revelation 12:13-14

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*. And to the

woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

Did Christ build His Church or did the Church (the woman described here) give birth to Christ?

The proper explanation is that the woman (the one particularly of verse 2) is the Old Testament “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38)—the twelve tribes comprising ancient Israel that gave birth to Jesus Christ, who was of the tribe of Judah. Christ then built His Church (Matt. 16:18), which is the New Testament “woman”! Most of Revelation 12 describes her, and the devil’s attacks against her until the end of the age.

Suggested reading:

- *Promised Protection – Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?*
- *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History?*
- *Where Is God’s Church?*
- *Here Is The Restored Church of God*

Revelation 14:11

“And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.”

Some assume that this verse refers to immortal souls burning forever in “hell.”

The time frame of what is described here is yet to come. The passage is referring to “Babylon” (vs. 8), “that great city, because she made all nations drink of...her fornication.” This is the final, religious/political, end-time revival of the Roman Empire also described in Daniel 2:42-43 as the “toes,” and in Daniel 7:7, 24 as the tenth horn. Revelation 13 describes it as the seventh and last horn, and Revelation 17:12 describes it as the seventh head, having ten horns (which has not yet appeared).

Revelation 14:9-10 states, “If any man worship the beast [this final end-time revival] and his image, and receive his mark...he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...in the presence of the Lamb.” As long as the people who are participating in this “beast” system continue to rebel against God, they will receive “no rest day nor night” (vs. 11). This does not state that they will be burning in hell for eternity. What it does say is that once their bodies are burned up, the smoke ascends forever. The fire extinguishes itself

but the gases from the smoke will continue to circulate in the atmosphere.

The fire that is talked about is here on this earth—not in an “ever-burning hell.” Malachi plainly states, “And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts” (4:3).

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*
- *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?*
- *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*

Revelation 19:1

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God.”

What is the identity of those called “much people in heaven”?

The Greek word *ochlos* is improperly translated “people.” This word has a variety of synonyms in the English language, *one* of which can be *people*.

Since the Bible clearly shows that the reward of the saved is rulership on Earth at Christ’s Return—not in heaven—another rendering should have been used. The Revised Standard Version and the Goodspeed translations render *ochlos* as “multitude” and the Moffatt version as “host.” The Numeric English New Testament and the Amplified New Testament render it “crowd.”

While each of these translations uses a slightly different word, they more accurately deliver the meaning of the original Greek. The “people” in heaven referenced in Revelation 19:1 are, in fact, the “host, multitude or crowd” there. This scripture refers to the vast millions of angels—who are in heaven. *They* are the multitude there, which sing and praise God (Rev. 5:11-12).

Suggested reading:

- *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*
- *Is There Life After Death?*
- *The Awesome Potential of Man*
- *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

Revelation 20:13-14

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged

every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

What are the events described here? What is their timeframe and who do they involve?

Verse 13 refers somewhat to the *second resurrection*, but primarily the *third resurrection*, with the second to occur at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints on Earth, when all mankind since Adam will be resurrected to physical life for 100 years (Isa. 65:17-25). All these people will be “judged” from God’s word—“the books” of verse 12.

The *third resurrection* (vs. 14 and 15) is when all that pertains to *hell* (gehenna) and *death* (the entire idea and reality of physical death) are both destroyed in the lake of fire. This last fulfillment—the third resurrection—occurs at the very end of God’s Plan, the time *after* He will have given every person who has ever lived a full opportunity to qualify to enter His kingdom. This is the time when the wicked shall be resurrected to see all that they have rejected before they are turned into the “ashes under the...feet” of the righteous (Mal. 4:1-3).

Suggested reading:

- *The Truth About Hell*
- *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*
- *Revelation Explained at Last!*

Author’s Note: It is hoped that the reader will want to examine in more depth the subjects raised throughout the book. This is done by studying the literature offered. Then recognize that we have much more material available than what has been referenced here. All of this may lead you to the greatest decision you have faced in your life.

EPILOGUE

SECTION I

The Twelve Rules of Effective Bible Study

How can the Bible be the world's all-time best seller, yet remain the most misunderstood book ever? The answer: because people refuse to believe that it means what it says, it is twisted, misrepresented and maligned. Recalling the introduction, if your mind has been opened to the truth, apply these simple rules to understand God's Word!

Most who study the Bible benefit little—or not at all. Often, they become confused, discouraged and give up, saying, “I just can't understand what it is talking about.”

If this is you, it need not continue.

Did you know there are fundamental—basic—rules that govern proper Bible study? There are! And most ignore, misunderstand or know nothing of them. Yet, when properly applied, these rules unlock the treasures of doctrine, instruction, knowledge, prophecy, correction and hard-to-be-understood passages contained in God's Word.

Many Are Ignorant

Thirty years ago, a newspaper reporter exposed Christians' ignorance of the Bible. Since then, such ignorance has greatly worsened.

The account begins, “Some months ago, a Protestant pastor administered a Bible quiz to the members of his congregation. The questions were very simple. Anyone with a general knowledge of the Bible should have been able to answer all of them easily.

“The results staggered the pastor.

“Only five percent of his flock made a commendable grade on the test. Fifteen percent failed to give a single correct answer. Sixty percent were unable to name the four Gospels. Seventy-five percent could not identify Calvary (Golgotha) as the place where Jesus was crucified.

“Some congregations might do better than that,” continued the reporter, “but not many. The vast majority of Americans today are Bible illiterates. They simply have never read the book which they profess to regard as the ‘Word of God.’”

The reporter concluded, “A great many people have turned away from the Bible because when they do try to read it, they find they cannot understand it... To the modern reader, it has a remote and antiquarian flavor. It is likely to leave him with the impression the Bible is an ancient history book that has no real relevance to his life here and now” (Louis Cassels, UPI Special Correspondent on religious affairs).

Another quote sheds light on how society considers Biblical knowledge irrelevant. J.B. Phillips, author of the Phillips translation (*The New Testament in Modern English*), reported in his booklet, *The Young Church in Action*, “It is one of the curious phenomena of modern times that it is considered perfectly respectable to be abysmally ignorant of the Christian faith. Men and women who would be deeply ashamed of having their ignorance exposed in matters of poetry, music, or painting, for example, are not in the least perturbed to be found ignorant of the New Testament” (p. 6).

A true Christian should—and would—always seek to solidify his basic understanding of the Bible. Rather than smugly comparing himself with people of the world, he should either “study to show himself approved” (II Tim. 2:15) or consider his own need to “... strengthen the things which remain” (Rev. 3:2).

No one should feel secure at their level of understanding—neither could anyone justify such a position in this struggle to grow and overcome. All who sincerely seek God need to examine themselves and make their Bible study more productive—more edifying. With this in mind, let’s look at the basic rules of Bible study.

Rule #1: Ask God for Guidance

Before beginning your Bible study, ask God to open your mind to better understand the Bible’s spiritual principles.

Also pray for guidance and wisdom as to *what* to study. Then focus on a particular topic, book or chapter. As God opens your understanding, what is confusing to the world becomes interesting and exciting to you.

Review what the Psalmist recorded in Psalms 119:33-40. Carefully digest each verse and each word of this passage. We must all come to view God's Word in this light.

Asking for and receiving understanding from God is no small thing. Many scholars and men of great intelligence have mastered the Hebrew and Greek languages, and spent their lives translating and analyzing each verse of the Bible—yet they do not get its message.

One such individual was James Moffatt. He translated a commendable version of the Bible. Yet the message went completely over his head. He made the truth of God much more clear, but he—along with the whole world (Rev. 12:9)—remained blinded to its meaning.

Even in the preface to the revised and final edition of Moffatt's *The Bible, A New Translation*, he made the following comments: "This is great literature and great religious literature, this collection of ancient writings which we call the Bible, and any translator has a deep sense of responsibility as he undertakes to transmit it to modern readers." Here was an individual of great intelligence, yet without God's Spirit and guidance, he considered the Bible mere literature.

Adam Clarke, writer of the famous six-volume commentary of the entire Bible, also did not get the message. Some of the Pharisees were people of great intellect who studied Scripture for endless hours—yet all in vain. If these and others of similar intellect failed to get the message, we should never assume that we could study the Bible and, on our own, automatically understand it.

Only by asking God to open our minds can we understand the Bible—receive the message within. If we think we no longer need to *ask* for His guidance, then our understanding will diminish—unless we wake up and realize that true understanding comes from God.

Rule #2: Study the Bible for Correction

The second rule is closely related to the first. It should also be part of the prayer for guidance and understanding. Sincerely petition God to correct you through your Bible study.

The Bible shows us when and where we err and what to do about it—the diagnosis along with the prescription—free of charge.

Notice II Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *CORRECTION*, for *instruction in righteousness*: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

A key scripture on the subject of correction that we should read often is Jeremiah 10:23-24: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. O LORD, CORRECT ME, but with judgment; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.”

Of course, this article, along with other articles and sermons from the true ministers of God, admonish us to seek correction from God’s Word. But that desire must ultimately come from within.

You must earnestly seek and desire for God to straighten your path. Once again, this request for correction should be part of the prayer before Bible study.

Read Isaiah 66:1-2: “Thus says the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things has Mine hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.”

Humility and trembling at God’s Word go hand-in-hand with the attitude of seeking correction from His Word. Remember: We should concentrate on correcting ourselves, not others (Matt. 7:3-5).

Rule #3: “Prove All Things”

The word *prove* means to “put to the test.” Scientists and design engineers prove their finished products by testing them. Read I Thessalonians 5:21: “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good.”

The first thing that should be proven is the existence of the Creator God. The popular fallacy of evolution, which attempts to explain away the existence of an all-powerful Creator God, has made it difficult for some to completely dismiss lingering doubts. There exists an abundance of well-written literature proving that creation is the

only explanation for the existence of life and the universe. One example is our own free booklet *Does God Exist?*

Creation must be proven by everyone in the Church of God. Through the careful reading of that literature, one will see it proven—and effectively will have proven it to himself—by weighing the overwhelming evidence now available.

God commands us to prove Him and His tithing laws: “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10).

This is an excellent example of putting something to the test. Many have done this and have discovered that God definitely keeps His part of the bargain.

Finally, consider the example of the Bereans in Acts 17:11: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so.”

The Bereans were searching to prove that Paul was right. Their attitude was not one of anger and bitterness, but one of proving the truth. This is consistent with I Corinthians 13:6-7, which shows that love “rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the TRUTH; bears all things, believes all things [in God’s Word], hopes all things, endures all things.”

To prove all things means to get to the truth of the matter—and to accept that truth with positive assurance. This is the foundation of hope and endurance.

Rule #4: God’s Word Never Contradicts Itself

Most theologians and Bible critics believe that the Bible started from “primitive and child-like origins.” They also love to assert that it “contradicts itself.” There are others who say the Bible is not to be taken literally.

Ironically, these observations are most often made by professing Christians. Such statements expose the ignorance of the Bible found in minds lacking God’s Holy Spirit.

What does the Bible reveal about God’s consistency and rationality? “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob

are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). Also see Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” We can trust in these sound statements. The proofs of archeology and fulfilled prophecy merely add to the already overwhelming evidence of the Bible’s consistency.

One such “contradiction” is Proverbs 26:4-5: “*Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.*”

These verses are often cited to prove the Bible contradicts itself. But after examining them, we will see this is not true. These verses contain great wisdom.

The two principles stated above are complementary, not contradictory. The principle to use in any given situation would depend upon the circumstances.

Verse 4 states, “Answer NOT a fool according to his folly, *lest you also be like unto him.*”

This verse explains that we are not to degrade ourselves by petty bickering and arguing. We are not to debate with someone who is obviously trying to stir up contention or we appear to be no different.

The example cited for this reaction was Luke 20:1-8. As Christ was teaching in the temple, the chief priest, elders and scribes came to Him, “And spoke unto Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority do You these things? Or who is He that gave You this authority?”

The temple authorities were not seeking advice or understanding from Christ. They sought a response that could amount to Christ condemning Himself.

Verses 3 through 8 show the dilemma that Christ presented to them by answering their question with a question:

“And He answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer Me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then believed you him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

Had Christ answered them in any other way, a “war of words” would have taken place. But Christ saw their motive and did not stoop to their level. His question stopped them cold—as He knew it would. Thus, He avoided needless strife by not answering the foolish

authorities according to their folly. On other occasions, He said nothing in the face of a wrongly motivated or deceitful question.

Now notice Proverbs 26:5: “Answer a fool according to his folly, *lest he be wise in his own conceit.*” In this case, one should answer according to the folly in which the question was presented. Not to answer the challenge will cause the questioner to feel he has prevailed. A good example of this was Paul’s reaction to the Corinthians, who were being led astray by false apostles.

This was *not* a time for silence. Notice Paul’s answer in II Corinthians 11:23-27: “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in *stripes* above measure, in *prisons* more frequent, in *deaths* oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I *beaten* with rods, once was I *stoned*, thrice I suffered *shipwreck*, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In *journeyings* often, in *perils of waters*, in perils of *robbers*, in perils by mine *own countrymen*, in perils by the *heathen*, in perils in the *city*, in perils in the *wilderness*, in perils in the *sea*, in perils among *false brethren*; In *weariness* and *painfulness*, in *watchings* often, in *hunger* and *thirst*, in *fastings* often, in *cold* and *nakedness.*”

Paul made his point. These false teachers were inclined to boast. But Paul’s credentials and sacrifices overwhelmed their puny claims.

Proverbs 26:4 and 5 do not contradict each other. Rather, there is much wisdom contained in these verses—wisdom we should employ in our daily lives.

Never believe that God was unable to record and preserve His Word without stumbling into what would be disagreements with Himself.

Rule #5: Find Out What the Bible Really Says

Applying rule number five of Bible study often resolves misunderstandings. Many misconceptions result because the world is blind to the plain truth of God’s Word. For example, professing Christianity universally teaches that Christ used parables to make His meaning clearer for the “simple minds” of the first century. Not so! “Simple-mindedness” was not limited to the first century—there is an abundance of it today.

Why *did* Christ speak in parables? The Bible says, “And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speak You unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:10-11). Why can’t the world understand this?

Spiritual blindness!

Christ continues, “For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: *because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not*, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (vs. 12-15).

Verses 16-17 refer only to Christ’s disciples and His Church—not to the world or churchianity: “But blessed are *your* eyes, for they see: and *your* ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which *you* see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which *you* hear, and have not heard them.”

Most of the world cannot be faulted for their blindness. Their opportunity for salvation will come when God calls them at a later time. The fact that blindness has been lifted from one’s eyes should be humbling. It is the only reason that we can now understand the Bible.

Notice Luke 17:20-21: “...The kingdom of God comes not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” To say that God’s kingdom is within people goes against many detailed prophecies in the Bible. Why this *apparent* contradiction?

First of all, the word “within” occurs only in the King James Version. The next rule helps solve this dilemma.

Rule #6: Examine the Context

Context simply means “with text.” Checking the context involves reading the text before and after the issue in question. In order to

answer the questions pertaining to Luke 17:21, it must be determined to whom Christ was speaking.

Verse 20: “And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God comes not with observation:”

Christ was speaking to the Pharisees. Obviously, the kingdom of God did not reside within these carnal, hostile pretentious “leaders.” This, together with the fact that only the KJV used the word “within” in this verse, tells us that “within” is not the correct translation. Most translations use the term “among.” Christ was telling the Pharisees that He was the *Representative* of the kingdom of God that was temporarily “among” them.

Understanding the *context* is vital to understanding the *meaning* of scriptures. Context points to the intent of the scripture in question. It answers who, what, when, where, why and how.

It is careless to read scriptures out of context, because there are statements in the Bible such as “You shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). In order to determine whether this is true, the context must be read. In this case, Satan the devil is deceiving Eve. Checking the entire context of this verse takes us back to Genesis 2:17, where God told Adam, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.”

False teachers deceive people who do not investigate such deceptive practices, like taking verses out of context and misapplying their meaning. One of the many benefits of taking verses in proper context is building up resistance against deception.

Rule #7: “Here a little, there a little”

No single scripture can be used to establish doctrine. We must take all the scriptures on a given subject and weigh them in order to grasp the overall doctrine. There is great value in gathering all the scriptures on a single subject, as we are instructed to do in Isaiah 28.

We previously mentioned that renowned scholars such as James Moffatt and Adam Clark could study the Bible for a lifetime and still not understand the truth. Those called to the truth realize that, without God’s Spirit leading them, the door to scriptural understanding is shut.

We also covered how Christ used parables to hide the real meaning from the world. This principle applies to understanding of the entire Bible.

The Bible is written in a way that defies understanding on the physical level. With this in mind, read Isaiah 28:9-10: “Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; *line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*”

We must diligently examine verses throughout the Bible to gain knowledge and understand doctrine. This requires being led by God’s Spirit.

Continue in Isaiah 28: “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear” (vs. 11-12). These verses show an intentional hiding of the meaning by God (as if it were a foreign language). But they also show a *willful rejection* of the truth: “they would not hear.”

Verse 13 continues, and reiterates, “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; *that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*”

Again, we see the unmistakable *hiding* of the meaning to those not called now.

The next example shows the need to draw from precept upon precept and line upon line. It shows that verses people call contradictory actually supplement each other. This is the case with what was written on the stake where Christ was crucified.

Let’s read four different verses that critics say are contradictions. We will find them to be otherwise.

Matthew 27:37: “And set up over His head His accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

Mark 15:26: “And the superscription of His accusation was written over, **THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

Luke 23:38: “And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

John 19:19: “And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

Together, these verses show that Pilate did the writing, and that three versions were written in three different languages.

These four contributions from four different authors give us a complete account of what was written. Rather than these four scrip-

tures contradicting each other, as we assemble the “precept upon precept and line upon line,” we can see the full picture—“THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

By comparing the four gospels, one can see how these accounts work in harmony to present a complete understanding.

Rule #8: The Bible Interprets Itself

During Herbert W. Armstrong’s ministry, many people said they admired his “interpretation” of the Bible or of prophecy. But he would adamantly respond that he had no private interpretation, but always let the Bible interpret itself.

Consider one example where men have blatantly misinterpreted the plain meaning of the Bible—the title of the book of Revelation.

Worldly Christians believe that the book of Revelation was “The Revelation of Saint John the Divine.” However, the *real* title is found in the first verse of the text.

Revelation 1:1 states, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John:”

So, the real title of the book is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” It originated from God the Father and was given to Jesus Christ. Then Christ signified it by His angel, who revealed it to John. Men credit John, ignoring God and Christ—typical of interpretations by false Christians.

Note two types of symbols used in the first chapter of Revelation. One is mentioned in verse 12, where John saw seven golden candlesticks. In verse 16, he saw seven stars in the hand of the Son of Man.

How can we understand their meaning? By continuing to read within the context. Notice the explanation found in verse 20: “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels [Greek: angels or messengers] of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.” The Bible has interpreted itself!

Another good example of letting the Bible interpret itself is found in Revelation 17. Verse 1 states, “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying

unto me, Come here; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon *many waters*.”

What does the Bible mean by the term “many waters”? Is this talking about some woman “sailing the seven seas”? Is it the *Queen Mary* on a round-the-world voyage? Or is it, as many conclude, “something you just can’t know”?

However if we read on, fourteen verses later, the term “many waters” is explained: “And he said unto me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are *peoples*, and *multitudes*, and *nations*, and *tongues*” (vs. 15). So then this is a “woman”—understanding the identity of this religious entity is another subject—with authority or influence over large masses of people.

In this case, the term is not *immediately* explained. But it is explained later in the chapter.

Again, the Bible interpreted itself!

Rule #9: Start with Clear Scriptures

The ninth rule of Bible study is: Never attempt to establish doctrine by unclear scriptures—use plain ones.

An example of a vague scripture is found in Acts 10, where the Apostle Peter was being taught a principle from God. It is incredible how the world has twisted and perverted this scripture. At first, the meaning is ambiguous, but later becomes unmistakably clear: “And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call not you common” (vs. 15).

Many “Christians” presume that this verse permits them to eat unclean animals that are supposedly, now and forever, “cleansed.” Some people specialize in quoting and creatively interpreting vague scriptures. They do this because it gives them room to speculate and invent new doctrines.

Peter did not understand the meaning of this vision until later. Acts 10:28 states, “And he said unto them, You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; *but God has shown me that I should not call any MAN common or unclean.*”

Of and by itself, this vision would not be of value in establishing sound doctrine. Only after reading the full account does its real meaning become apparent—that Peter was speaking of men, not unclean animals.

Rule #10: Use More Than One Translation

There are advantages to using two or more Bible translations. Although the King James Version is a reliable translation, a few things are difficult to understand, because the translation is almost 400 years old.

These can be clarified by using a more modern translation, such as the New King James Version. The original KJV does offer a particular advantage—words supplied by the translators are italicized. This helps the reader to discern between translated words and implied words. Because some italicized words can be in error, caution is needed.

The Moffatt is a good study translation, because it is directly translated from the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts—not Latin transcriptions. Some modern translations are so watered down by liberal interpretations that it is best to avoid them except for a rare comparison. The New International Version is one of the most notorious liberal versions, which are designed to accommodate liberal modern theology.

One particular verse found only in the KJV is I John 5:7. It is not found in any older Greek manuscripts. It was most likely added by a monk scribe who injected the theology of the counterfeit church during the middle Ages.

It states, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” This heretical verse was injected to promote the false doctrine of the trinity—in spite of the fact that Revelation 22:18-19 gives a dire warning to any who would add to or take away from that book or Scripture in general.

Anytime you come to a questionable or vague scripture, cross-referencing other translations usually clears up questions.

Deletions of scriptures by scribes and monks also occurred during the Middle Ages. Those individuals are subject to the punishment recorded in Revelation 22:18-19.

An example of this would be Matthew 27:49. Part of the verse was deleted in order to promote the false idea that Christ “died of a broken heart.” In the KJV, Matthew 27:49 states, “The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” Yet, in the Mof-

fatt, this same verse states, "But the others said, 'Stop, let us see if Elijah does come to save Him!' (Seizing a lance, another pricked His side, and out came water and blood.)"

The parenthetical expression in verse 49 was left out of the KJV, but appears in the Moffatt and all other translations that reference the older Greek manuscripts. This shows exactly how Christ died. Again, consulting two or more translations usually solves such problems. Referencing multiple translations is an effective way to get to the truth of the matter. Remaining questions can usually be answered by referencing Bible helps.

Bible dictionaries and *Strong's Concordance* are among the best tools available to find the original meaning of words.

One must carefully distinguish words whose meanings have changed over the years. One example would be the word translated as "conversation." It means "conduct" in modern usage. Bible dictionaries help with these kinds of issues.

(Section IV will take a much more in-depth look at the subject of existing Bible translations, and which ones should or should not be used.)

Rule #11: Do Not Use Bible Helps to Establish Doctrine

Some of the more well-known and helpful reference works include *Clarke's Commentary*, *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* and *Halley's Bible Handbook*. These and other Bible helps can be of value in increasing one's understanding.

Other useful helps are the margin references in some bibles and helps at the end of certain other bibles. Be cautious in using these aids, however, because much of the information they contain is misleading. The scholars who wrote them were generally not true Christians and therefore lacked God's Spirit. As a result, error is inevitable.

These works can help to supplement our understanding of historical background and grammatical details. But they should *never* be relied upon to establish doctrine. We are not to lean upon *their* interpretation of the Bible.

Most of these scholars echo the doctrines of false Christianity. An example is their distorted interpretation of the meaning of the Lord's day, referenced in Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit on the *Lord's day*, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."

These scholars almost unanimously believe that the Lord's day means Sunday. Those with any knowledge of the truth recognize that this could only mean the coming prophesied Day of God's wrath, the Day of the Lord (sometimes also referred to as the "Year of the Lord"), covered in detail in Revelation. Other references to this unmistakable term are found in Joel 2:31, Amos 5:18 and Zephaniah 1:14-16.

Remember, reference works are ideal for filling in technical details of Scripture, but never for interpreting the meaning or to establish doctrine.

Rule #12: Make Notes in Your Bible

Many believe that the Bible is to be treated with reverence, which is true, but that the margin should never be marked in. Only the message contained within should be revered. The paper, ink, and leather that make up the physical Bible are not holy. What *is* holy about the Bible is the truth it contains—the words of spiritual instruction.

Making notations in your Bible helps amplify and reinforce God's message, and is acceptable to Him.

The information contained in the Bible is priceless. How we react to those words is God's primary focus—not how reverently we treat the paper and ink.

Wide-margin bibles are ideal for inserting valuable notes. These notes can come from sermons, Church Bible studies, technical details from reference works and many other sources.

It is satisfying to open the Bible to a difficult scripture and understand it by looking at your notes.

If you have neglected this, now is a good time to get back into it. Some who have understood the truth for some time mistakenly assume that they have already heard it all. The turbulence of these last days makes it necessary to understand prophecy as it is being fulfilled.

Excitement about the truth should become more contagious as the sense of urgency keeps pace with accelerating events.

Remember that our understanding is never complete. The "old" established truths are still being taught by The Restored Church of God. Certain prophetic understandings that were not as apparent before the prophesied apostasy are now significantly more obvious.

Marking the Bible helps us internalize the precious truth that so many have taken for granted.

It may also be helpful to set aside special Bible studies to review your personal margin notes. You may find that many notes were incomplete and that others need expanding. Besides providing an excellent review, this exercise should help you make more effective margin notes in the future.

Bible Study Is Rewarding

By diligently applying these most fundamental rules, you will find that personal Bible study is far more interesting and challenging. When you find it more difficult to break off rather than to get started, you can safely say that your Bible study has become exciting and rewarding—as God would have it!

But the question of the *authority* of the Bible, meaning identifying *proof* that it is God's divinely inspired Instruction Book, remains...

SECTION II

Bible Authority... Can It Be Proven?

The Bible is the most popular book ever written. But is it mere superstition—the uninspired work of men? Or is it simply Hebrew and Greek literature—perhaps only useful as a history book? This book of three-quarters of a million words purports to be the Word of God. Must its authenticity be accepted on faith? Can its divine authority be demonstrated? Here is *proof* of the Bible!

The Bible has been called the Book of books and we saw has long held the title of world's best seller. Most people have one—and the “family Bible” is a cherished possession in many households. The family Bible on my mother's side dates to the mid-to-late 1700s, but, sadly, those who used it, at least in recent generations, primarily did so for the purpose of recording weddings, births, deaths and family genealogy.

Why does this book remain an almost complete mystery to so many—again, with few even *professing* to understand it? And why is it that most Bibles are used as a showpiece, lying unopened, gathering dust? Many actively try to discredit the Bible, while others treat it with passive indifference. Still others hold it in awe—believing “on faith” that it is divinely inspired. They seem to require no proof of this, yet lack the necessary conviction to truly believe and practice its words in times of great stress and personal trial.

But can one actually *prove* the Bible? This is a huge question! Just as most never seek to prove the *existence of God*, most never

concern themselves with proving the authority of the Bible. They either have no interest in such proof or they assume there is none—that facts and evidence of its authority do not exist!

What about you? Have *you* taken the time to seek actual, tangible PROOF of the Bible's authority? As with the existence of God, have you been taught that you must accept it “on faith”? Most people are never challenged to find real proof that the Bible is the inspired record of a Supreme Being. Circumstances rarely *force* people to undertake such a task. This is probably the single biggest reason that most never do. While I regularly “went to church” when growing up, I was never required, nor felt compelled, to prove either that God exists or that He authored the Bible. Nor was any proof of these ever given or offered to me! And not one person ever suggested to me that I should even be concerned with proving the answers to these two looming questions.

Stop and think for a moment! Let's apply basic logic.

What kind of God would write an Instruction Book about how to live, command that it be followed as His Word and then offer no proof that it is? It insults whoever is God to even believe Him capable of such inconsistency—and unfairness! On what basis would He—or even *could* He—require obedience to such an Instruction Book, if He left no proof that it was authentic?

The apostle Paul wrote *in the Bible*, speaking on behalf of the One who claims to have authored it, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). If God wrote the Bible, and He tells you to “*Prove all* things,” then surely He would not make proof of His authorship of the Bible an exception. It states, “ALL things.” In other words, would God require you to prove what the Bible teaches about all *other* points of doctrine or practice, but not expect you to prove whether an all-powerful God stands behind its authorship, requiring you to then obey it—to adhere to its teachings? What sense would that make? God would never exempt from the need for proof (thus making them towering *exceptions* to this command) the questions of His own existence and His authorship of the Bible!

We must take this instruction at face value. If God says to “*Prove* all things,” and also, “*Prove Me* now herewith...” (Mal. 3:10), then He means it. And if God did not make the answers to these questions provable, He is setting Himself up to be discredited. On the other hand, if the Bible *is* the inspired Word of a great living God, then it is

the standard by which you will be judged. And dare you delay any longer the process of proving its all-important authority in your life?

Most spend their entire lives worried about what PEOPLE think and say. Few concern themselves with what GOD thinks or says. Be honest and consider *yourself*. How much time have *you* spent trying to prove either the existence of God or that the Bible is His Word?

So then, the answer to both of these questions is that they *can* be proven. And you will notice, as we summarize the first great proof of the Bible, that it is also inseparable from proof that God exists. In fact, each different proof that the Bible is the Word of God is also its own proof there IS a God!

The First Proof—Evolution Disproved?

No discussion about the Bible's authorship would be complete without addressing the subject of evolution. It represents, perhaps, the first proof, in overall priority, that should be examined.

Most people have been taught from childhood that mankind evolved through a long process. While the theory of evolution is commonly accepted throughout the Western World, it has never been more than an *unproven theory*. Yet, to believe in the biblical Creation account is considered unfashionable, un-“chic” and even unintelligent. And, of course, if the theory of evolution *is true*, then the Bible is a flawed book. At best, it is a mixture of truth and error. If the Bible can be so wrong, on a matter as important as the beginning of all life on Earth (“Genesis” means *beginning*), then it cannot be trusted on any *other* point. If evolution occurred, the entire Bible collapses like a house of cards. (After all, Christ Himself referenced and spoke of the literal man *Adam* numerous times, as did the apostle Paul.)

If evolution can be *disproven*, and the Creation account firmly established, then a powerful proof of the Bible's authority has also been established.

Make no mistake! ALL of the Bible purports to be the Word of God. It *all* stands or it *all* falls together. Either the 66 assembled books of the Bible form a book of truth from start to finish—and mankind should tremble before it—or, if evolution is true, the Bible must be judged false. It would thus stand as the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting mankind!

I have carefully prepared an extensive booklet, *Does God Exist?* It is a companion to this section and establishes, irrefutably, through

many proofs, the absolute existence of God. Again, this question is inseparable from that of whether evolution occurred. It also firmly establishes the utter impossibility of evolution, leaving no doubt why the God of the Bible states, in several places, “Only the *fool* has said in his heart, *There is no God.*”

Space does not permit repeating that entire booklet here. However, it covers proofs from astronomy, the laws of thermodynamics, the fossil record gap, the concept of “irreducible complexity” as per DNA and cells, the presence of “tiny engines” inside cells, the law of biogenesis, the extraordinary complexity of the human mind, the amazing human eye, the nature of Australian termites, the impossibility of certain kinds of fish and birds having evolved—and the staggering mathematical improbability that even *one* planet like earth could have appeared anywhere in the universe *by chance*. These proofs establish not only that God does exist, but also that the Genesis Creation account is the only plausible explanation for the origin of life.

The evidence is plain, emphatic and irrefutable—and establishes the biblical account beyond question! The fact that certain “fools” (God’s choice of terms, not mine) might ignore, reject or seek to discredit them is irrelevant to their validity. I ignore such people because I am instructed in Proverbs to “*Answer not a fool* according to his folly, lest you also be like unto him” (26:4). People who reject absolute proof are foolish and ought not to be dignified with an *answer* to their foolishness. This booklet has been written for those who seek—who want—the truth!

Evolutionists invariably use terms like “We suspect...We are coming to believe...What may have happened...We may theorize that...It is our opinion...What probably occurred...We do not know...,” etc. These terms do not inspire much confidence. The dogmatic statements of the Bible *do*! The God of the Bible never speaks in such uncertain terms. He does not have to. He not only knows He created mankind, but that it also can be proven. Thus, He speaks boldly—with **AUTHORITY**—about what He has done!

Consider further. Evolutionists do not know the **PURPOSE** of life. They do not know *why* they were born. And they reject the authority of God’s Word because they do not want Him “sticking His nose” into their lives. If they can discredit the authenticity of His Word, then they need not obey Him.

I cannot make you accept the proofs of God’s existence. These are decisions you must make. I cannot force you to act upon proofs

of the authority of His Word. I disproved evolution over forty years ago and had no choice but to act on this knowledge, if I *were* to remain an honest seeker of truth.

Remember, it is in the Bible that the six-day Creation account of God creating all plants, animals and man himself is found. If evolution is disproven, it is the very Bible account that is verified—validated—established—as the true record of how all life on Earth came into being. We have now established the first and greatest proof of the Bible. However, until you have read *Does God Exist?*, this proof is not complete. Take time to read it. (And also read our even more extensive brochure *Evolution – Facts Fallacies and Implications*, which thoroughly disproves evolution.)

The Cause and Effect Principle

We are now ready to examine the important proof of the principle of cause and effect.

Most people live their lives completely unaware of *why* things either “go right” or “go wrong.” They seem unable to comprehend that what they do, or do *not* do, has a direct effect on their lives. Most do not recognize that for every cause there is an *effect*, or conversely, for every effect, there was a *cause*. Scientists understand this principle in physics, but mankind is unaware that the same is true spiritually.

Consider a few basic points. Let’s reason together. Exactly how does cause and effect work in one’s life? Some simple examples bear examination.

If you routinely eat too much, what happens? You will get sick, or fat—or both! There is no mystery to this.

If you drink too much alcohol, you will become intoxicated. This could lead to a next-day headache, being arrested, or even an auto accident that could result in injury or death to yourself or others. Again, there is no mystery to this.

If you break laws, you could go to jail or prison. This will affect your family, employment opportunities and your entire future. Once again, no mystery.

In this way, the law of cause and effect impacts your life—and the life of everyone on Earth—in endless ways.

If industry pollutes the environment, the result is polluted air or water, or even the much-debated problem of global warming. If

countries go to war, the result is economic upheaval, disease, famine and general misery for all involved. If parents neglect the proper rearing of their children, or children do not obey their parents, the result could be poor performance in school, drug addiction, criminal conduct or worse. None of this is hard to understand.

But the Bible is also a book about CAUSE and EFFECT! It contains literally hundreds of different laws, each carrying the power of cause and effect for those who keep or break them.

Whether one identifies and knows all the laws of the Bible is not relevant to whether breaking them will bring punishment. Just as speeding can result in a ticket, whether the driver knew the speed limit or not, so those who break the laws of God reap penalties—whether they know they are violating specific laws or not!

Look at the world around you. It is filled with confusion, poverty, disease, ignorance, war, chaos and misery. Have you ever asked yourself *WHY*? What is the REASON mankind has never been able to solve these problems? Why do they only grow worse with the passing of time? Because the laws of God are being routinely broken by earth's billions of human inhabitants.

The One who claims to have written the Bible states that His great law, the Ten Commandments, is “holy, just, good and spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14). Again, consider your basic understanding of cause and effect. When those laws are obeyed, it can be proven that they bring blessings, benefits and good things into the lives of those who obey them. Mankind has rejected the Instruction Book that would reveal to him the *cause* of all his problems and misery.

Space does not permit that this section cover, in precise detail, the many laws of God, and how they are related to cause and effect. However, throughout the Bible, its Author promises blessings, benefits and good results to those who take each particular promise at its word. (Read our book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*)

God promises to heal all those who keep His laws and exercise faith in His power to perform the healing (Ex. 15:26; Jms. 5:14-15). He promises to greatly bless all those who obey His Sabbath (Isa. 58:13-14; Mark 2:27-28). He promises good health to all those who obey His many health laws. Each promise involves employing a right cause (obedience) to achieve a right effect (blessing or benefit).

In each of these cases, and in many others, God describes a cause and effect relationship that PROVES the inspiration behind His instruc-

tions. But it will only work for those who are willing to take Him at His Word!

While the determined skeptic will reject the reasoning described here—and do it to his own great hurt, because he thinks he can defy the law of cause and effect—the one who is *willing* to take the Author of the Bible at face value will find an almost endless series of very compelling proofs that the Bible is not a book of men. However, the material here is not written to, and cannot help, the closed-minded skeptic. But it certainly can help *you*, if you remain open to the powerful proofs that await examination.

The Gospel Goes Around the World

Before covering one final and *most powerful proof* of the REAL AUTHORITY behind the Bible, one additional proof needs to be examined. It requires a brief, special explanation.

God called Herbert W. Armstrong in the fall of 1926. He was baptized in 1927, and ordained in 1931. By early 1934, he had begun a radio broadcast and had written the first issue of *The Plain Truth* magazine. That humble beginning, in Eugene, Oregon, was the start of the fulfillment of a stunning Bible prophecy. It foretold the restoring and preaching of the true gospel of the *kingdom of God* as a witness around the world, just prior to the Return of Jesus Christ.

The world has believed a false gospel about the *person* of Jesus Christ. Until Herbert W. Armstrong was raised up to powerfully take the true gospel around the world to hundreds of millions of people, the knowledge of Christ's soon-coming, world-ruling government had been lost for nineteen centuries.

Mr. Armstrong wrote two booklets proving the authority of the Bible. The following quote concludes his later booklet, entitled *The Bible Superstition or Authority...And Can You Prove It?* It appeared under the subhead "A Present Day Proof" and expanded the above story:

"There is a present day PROOF of the existence of God and the authenticity of the Bible. It concerns this very booklet before your eyes this minute, and the work that produced it.

"The central prophecy given by Jesus Christ himself is found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. These are three accounts by three inspired writers writing on the same theme.

“I refer to Matthew 24:14, ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.’ Jesus was speaking.

“He was replying to a question by the apostles, ‘What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?’ (Verse 3). This is the only place in the Bible where the words ‘end of the world’ appear.

“Jesus was speaking to his disciples atop the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem from the east. The gospel of Christ, the only gospel he proclaimed and taught, was the kingdom of God. In verse 11 of this same speech Jesus warned them that many false prophets would arise. In verse 4 Jesus warned these apostles: ‘Take heed that no man deceive you.’ He was speaking to them. He had preached to and taught them the good news of the kingdom of God. In verse 5, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘For many shall come in my name,’—every place in the Bible when people came in the name of Christ they were appearing as his representatives or ministers, ‘saying I [Jesus] am Christ, and shall deceive many.’

“That happened. Within a very short period after the Church was founded on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, a violent controversy arose concerning whether the gospel to be proclaimed was the gospel OF Christ—Jesus’ own gospel that he proclaimed and taught, or a gospel ABOUT Christ. Jesus had come as a messenger bearing a message from God about the kingdom of God. That message was his gospel. But soon many were ignoring Jesus’ gospel—the kingdom of God—and preaching merely that Jesus was the Christ, preaching about the messenger, ignoring his message or gospel. That is still continuing today. In Galatians 1:5-6 we learn they were, only 20 years after the Church was founded, turning to another gospel than that which Jesus taught.

“For 1,900 years this went on. Then, beginning 1934, the true Church of God started the...*World Tomorrow* program, for the first time in 1,900 years proclaiming the gospel OF THE KINGDOM! Meanwhile, during the years we have been proclaiming this gospel, the weapons of mass destruction have been produced that can erase all humanity. THE END OF THE WORLD—OF THIS AGE—IS NEAR!

“That very fact is another proof of the authority of the Bible!

“Yes, IT TRULY IS TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH!”

The Restored Church of God continues to fulfill this prophecy by carrying on the Work God begun through Mr. Armstrong.

The Proof of Prophecy

With the previous quote, we have *begun* to demonstrate the most powerful—and perhaps the single most convincing—proof of the authority of the Bible. It stands undeniable.

Everyone wants to know what the future holds. In ever-increasing numbers, people are seeking psychics, “channelers,” tarot card and palm readers, fortunetellers, crystal ball gazers and every other medium to tell them what is going to happen. And they pay for this “service.” Yet, few go to the one infallible source, which foretells all the important events that will soon come upon the entire world.

Few understand that *nearly one-third* of the Bible is *prophecy*—that this portion of it is a history book written *in advance* of the history that it records.

If I offered to tell you of major, soon-coming events, and could offer proof to you that they were absolutely certain to happen, what would you do? What would you say if I could cite specific, detailed trends and events that would affect every country upon Earth? Then what if I told you that I would not bill you for it—that I would offer it to you *free of charge*? Would you be interested?

Well, let me tell you that is exactly what I can do! I can even show you where and how you can learn it for yourself! And afterwards, I tell you that you can rest assured that what you have learned will occur—and is no less certain than tomorrow’s sunrise. And when you have completed reading the balance of this booklet, it will be clear that you need never again doubt the authority of ANYTHING found in the Bible—including all matters discussed in its remaining two-thirds!

God’s Own Challenge to Disbelievers

Consider the following extraordinary challenge—or dare—from the One purporting to be the God of the Bible. It is quoted from the Moffat translation of the Bible: “Now, the Eternal cries, bring your case forward, now, Jacob’s King (God) cries, STATE YOUR PROOFS. Let us hear what happened in the past, that we may ponder it, or *show me what is yet to be, that we may watch how it turns out*; yes, let us hear *what is coming*, that we may be sure you are gods; come, do something or other that we may marvel at the sight!—why, *you* are things of naught, *you* can do nothing at all!” (Isa. 41:21-24).

Who dares to take God's challenge?

Fulfilled prophecy proves the divine authority of the Bible. No human can foretell events, let alone in great detail, to occur hundreds or thousands of years beyond his own lifetime. No *person* can affect the course of cities, states or kingdoms for centuries to come. For this reason, it has been said that prophecy is the challenge that the skeptics dare not accept! How true!

God *taunts* all such skeptics in the above verses.

The One who authored the Bible states in Isaiah 46:9-10: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things that are not yet done*, saying, My counsel shall stand..." Only an Omnipotent Being has the power to actually carry out events that span centuries or millennia of time. Only God can create or destroy nations or pronounce sentence on an entire civilization and bring it to pass!

Yes, prophecy is an enormous proof of God. We will now examine the longest single prophecy in the Bible.

Prophetic Role of the Middle East

Events in the Middle East carry far greater significance than most even begin to understand! It has been said that every eight years the Middle East suffers another war. Recent history bears the truth of this statement. This geographical area has been a bubbling caldron of unrest, contention, terrorism and failed attempts at peace for ages. Its problems defy a simple solution—and you will soon have proof that only almighty God can bring the peace that all there long for.

Some things must be understood! The whole world is tied to the Middle East in a remarkable way. The problems there will *not* go away, nor can the world pretend they will by simply looking the other way!

The Middle East is at the center of a great prophecy of which the world is ignorant. But for individuals who want to know God's Plan, this need not be. The facts of this wonderful plan *can* be known. The great God, who made the heavens, the earth—and you—holds the key to both knowing and solving the "Middle East problem." You need not be ignorant—you *can* know His solution.

Daniel's Amazing Prophecy

God is working out a great Plan on Earth. Most people are completely unaware that there *is* a purpose for mankind—let alone what it is! The present and *future* of the Middle East play a key role in God's Master Plan for humanity, and this region is at the center of an astounding prophecy that will affect the lives of all people on Earth before this age is finished.

Over 2,500 years ago, God inspired Daniel to record an amazing prophecy involving many fascinating twists and turns through history. This prophecy will culminate with tremendous events that will occur in *our time!* These events will stun and impact *all nations*—and yet they have been sealed, closed until this age!

Some Bible prophecies are general. Others are highly specific. Some involve single events that occur at specific moments in time. Others are fulfilled slowly over many years—or even over many centuries or millennia. Daniel's prophecy involves many smaller prophecies that we shall examine one by one, until we arrive at the modern age.

Nearly all theologians almost eagerly offer their opinions about the Bible's many prophecies—and they “interpret” them as they see fit. The true Bible student must always let the BIBLE INTERPRET THE BIBLE! We are about to examine one long chapter in the Bible. It will become clear that there is only one way to explain each of the forty-five separate verses in this chapter. The fulfillment of each verse is not subject to human reasoning, opinion or interpretation!

Many of these prophecies have been fulfilled exactly as God foretold, and have taken their place in history. *They are now facts that can be examined—and are powerful proofs that a Supreme Being foretold them and then BROUGHT THEM TO PASS!*

This long prophecy is found in Daniel 11. In chapter 10, Daniel is left astonished—completely shocked and overwhelmed by what God revealed would happen “at the end,” or in the *last days*. Chapter 12 plays a part in concluding the lengthy prophecy of chapter 11.

Open your Bible and read each verse beside the text of this booklet. No other approach will have the same impact. Also, bear in mind that men inserted all chapter and verse divisions of the Bible. While these are often helpful to Bible students, they can also inadvertently

break up long stories, thoughts or, as in this case, prophecies. The true meaning and scope of the subject matter are often obscured or lost from view.

Two Prophesied Great Kings

God gave Daniel this prophecy during the third year of the reign of Cyrus, the king of the Persian Empire (10:1). Daniel recorded that two powerful kings (actually competing kingdoms) would play a large role in Middle Eastern events, until the time of the end. These kings set the stage for the unfolding of vitally important future events, which culminate before Christ returns!

Two key verses set the stage. In Daniel 10:21, the archangel Gabriel speaks to Daniel: “But I will show you that which is noted in the *scripture of truth*.” Chapter 11 introduces the time setting. Verse 2 continues, “And now will I show you the TRUTH.” When God foretells events, He speaks the *truth*! They are *certain*! They *will happen*! Since no scripture can be broken (John 10:35), neither can any verse of this prophecy!

Consider the following verses: “Behold, there shall stand up yet *three kings* in Persia; and *the fourth* shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall *stir up* all against the realm of Grecia. And *a mighty king* shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will” (Dan. 11:2-3).

Who are these four kings—where the last is greater than the first? And who is the “mighty king”? Daniel was speaking of kings Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius of Persia as the first three, with Xerxes being the greatest and richest of the four. It was Xerxes who “stirred up” war with Greece.

We must now study several verses in Daniel 8. Alexander the Great’s father, King Philip of Macedonia, created a master plan to conquer and defeat the Persian Empire with a Greek army. But Philip died before he could execute his plan. His son invaded Persia in his stead, and Alexander the Great’s army fought the Persian army at the famous Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. (Daniel 8:2, 5-6).

Two years later, in 331 B.C., in a second battle at Arbela, Alexander completely defeated the Persian Empire. Having already conquered Egypt shortly before this, he followed this battle with the destruction of everything from the Middle East to India. This happened precisely as prophesied!

Daniel 11:4 says this of Alexander the Great: “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the *four winds* of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.”

Numerous historical authorities acknowledge that Alexander died suddenly, at age thirty-two, when he *was* “Cut off unexpectedly in the vigor of early manhood, he left no inheritor, either of his power or of his projects” (Rawlinson’s *A Manual of Ancient History*, p. 237). Alexander’s kingdom *did* break into four separate kingdoms, because he had no son to take his place. Prophecy *was* fulfilled just as God foretold.

The following four of Alexander’s generals represent the “four winds of heaven”—or directions to which his kingdom was divided: (1) *Lysimachus* ruled Asia Minor, (2) *Cassander* ruled Greece and Macedonia, (3) *Seleucus* ruled Syria, Babylonia and all regions east to India and (4) *Ptolemy* ruled Egypt, Judea and part of Syria.

From this point, the prophecy tracks two of these four kings or divisions of territory. The Syrian kingdom represents the “king of the north.” The Egyptian kingdom represents (vs. 5) the “king of the south,” because Egypt is generally south of Jerusalem. (Jerusalem is the central focus of all prophecy and, therefore, directions are always established by identifying locations in relation to this city.) These two kingdoms often fought back and forth across Palestine—the Holy Land and Jerusalem—with possession of this area constantly shifting, depending on the outcome of the last battle.

Ptolemy I, named Soter, established *Egypt* as a far greater, more dominant power than when Alexander was alive. Seleucus also became very strong. By 312 B.C., he had established an equally powerful kingdom in *Syria*. These two kingdoms became and represent, respectively, the “king of the south” and the “king of the north,” mentioned throughout this prophecy. Daniel 11:5 states, “And the *king of the south* shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.”

Amazing Fulfillment of Verse Six

Verse 6 is a specific and truly remarkable prophecy. Notice: “And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king’s

daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement [notice the term used in the margin, “rights,” meaning *marriage union* or *marriage rights*, in this case]: but she shall not retain the *power of the arm*; neither shall he *stand*, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and *he that begat her*, and he that strengthened her in these times.”

Fifty years later, Antiochus II (called Theos) was the king of the north, ruling at Syria. His wife, Laodice, carried great influence in the kingdom. But Theos divorced her and married Bernice, the daughter of the king of the south. Bernice was to lose the “power of her arm.” Her husband, the king of the north, was prophesied to not “stand,” and she and her father (“he that begat her”) were both prophesied to be “given up.” These three did come to a bad end.

An amazingly detailed, precisely fulfilled prophecy ensues from verse 6. Rawlinson states that “Her [Laodice’s] influence...engaged him in a war with Ptolemy Philadelphus [king of the south], B.C. 260, which is terminated, B.C. 252, by a marriage between Antiochus and Bernice, Ptolemy’s daughter...On the death of Philadelphus [“he that begat her”], B.C. 247, Antiochus repudiated Bernice, and took back his former wife, Laodice, who...doubtful of his constancy, murdered him to secure the throne for her son Seleucus (II) B.C. 246...Bernice...had been put to death by Laodice” (pp. 251-252).

We now examine the longest prophecy in the Bible, verse by verse.

Control of the Holy Land Shifts Repeatedly

Notice verse 7: “But out of a branch of *her roots* [Bernice’s parents] shall one [this is her brother who would take the throne in his father’s stead as the king of the south] stand up in his estate [“in his office,” margin], which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail.”

Rawlinson states, “Ptolemy Euergetes [the III, eldest son of Philadelphus, and therefore Bernice’s brother, a branch of her roots] invaded Syria, B.C. 245, to avenge the murder of his sister Bernice...In the war which followed, he carried everything before him” (pp. 252, 272).

Verse 8 speaks of the king of the south carrying silver and gold vessels, with captives, back to Egypt (vs. 9) after a successful invasion

of the north. In fact, Ptolemy III did conquer Syria, the Port of Antioch (capital of the kingdom) and Seleucia. He took a vast amount of spoils, including the return of 2,500 idolatrous vessels and molten images that, in 526 B.C., the northern king, Cambyses, had taken from Egypt.

The passage also states that King Ptolemy III would rule longer (“more years”) than the king of the north, Seleucus II. Seleucus died in 226 B.C., and Ptolemy III reigned *four years longer*, until 222 B.C.

At the death of Seleucus II, his kingdom was ruled successively by his two sons. Seleucus III reigned just three years (226-223 B.C.), while his brother, Antiochus III, also called “the Great,” reigned for 36 years (223-187 B.C.). Each established great armies to fight Egypt, recover their port city of Seleucia and avenge the defeat of their father.

It took twenty-seven years for Antiochus to recapture Seleucia and conquer Syria and the area from Judea to Gaza. Verses 10 and 11 state, “But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall *assemble* a multitude of *great forces*: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return and be stirred up [“be stirred up again,” margin], even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.”

Ptolemy IV fulfilled verse 11 exactly. After gathering an army of 20,000, he did “move with choler [anger]” against Antiochus the Great. He fulfilled verse 12 because he did “cast down [kill] many ten thousands.” However, he retreated too soon to Egypt, having made too hasty a peace with Antiochus, and wasted the substance he had gained, hence the phrase, “but he shall not be strengthened by it” (i.e., his victory over Antiochus in 217 B.C.).

Twelve years later (205 B.C.), Ptolemy Philopator, king of Egypt, died. His baby son, Ptolemy Epiphanes, was given the throne. Thus, Egypt became vulnerable to attack. Antiochus took advantage of this vulnerability “after certain years” by defeating Egypt. Verse 13 explains, “For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.”

Soon thereafter, Antiochus formed an alliance with Philip of Macedonia to attack Egypt and retrieve Phoenicia and Southern Syria from Egypt. The famous Jewish historian, Josephus, states that a large

number of Jews joined Antiochus in this campaign. Verse 14 describes this. Again, you should try to carefully read each verse from your Bible as this outline of history is laid before you.

Next, Antiochus laid siege all the way from Egypt to Sidon, eventually seizing control of Judea in 198 B.C., at the Battle of Mount Parnium. Notice the reference to the Holy Land (Judea) as “the glorious land” (vs. 15-16).

At this time (198 B.C.), Antiochus arranged to have his daughter, Cleopatra, and the now little boy king, Ptolemy Epiphanes, marry. But this plan to control and possess Egypt, through deceit, failed, because Cleopatra deceived her father, Antiochus, and did *not* help him take control of Egypt (vs. 17). (This was not the same Cleopatra as the famous Egyptian queen of 31 B.C.)

This caused Antiochus to focus on defeating and taking control of the coasts of Asia Minor, including the islands around it (197-196 B.C.). However, in the Battle of Magnesia (190 B.C.), Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, the Roman general, defeated him and destroyed his army (vs. 18).

Daniel records, “Then he shall turn his face toward the *fort* [fortresses] of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.” Antiochus, after redirecting his concerns toward his own fortresses, was killed in 197 B.C. while seeking to consolidate his assets by plundering the Oriental Temple of Belus in Elymais (vs. 19).

Heliodorus, the “raiser of taxes,” was sent by Seleucus IV Philopator to raise money throughout Judea. However, Heliodorus poisoned Seleucus IV, who consequently reigned only eleven years—187-176 B.C. (vs. 20).

Seleucus IV had no heir, so his younger brother (Epiphanes or Antiochus IV) won control of the kingdom by flattery (“flatteries”) and deceit. As the next verse states, this man *was* an extremely “vile,” contemptible person and his aid, Eumenes, *did* come to assist him. Rawlinson states that “Antiochus [Epiphanes], assisted by Eumenes, drives out Heliodorus, and obtains the throne, B.C. 176, he astonishes his subjects by an affectation of Roman manners and good-natured profuseness [flatteries]” (vs. 21).

The Role of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

The next verse pictures an effort by Antiochus Epiphanes to remove the Jewish High Priest (“prince of the covenant”). Antiochus’ pur-

pose was to install someone who would be loyal to him. Some misunderstand the term “prince of the covenant” to be a reference to Christ. However, it is not (vs. 22).

The next three verses are an insight into Antiochus’ character and manner. He started with a small group of supporters, yet through flattery and deceit he slipped into greater power and secured greater numbers of followers. Although his ancestors granted *favor* to the Jews, he swept into Lower Egypt and Galilee, thereby alienating the Jews. Rawlinson states that the Jews “were driven to desperation by the mad project of this self-willed monarch” and “Threatened with war by the ministers of Ptolemy Philometor [the then king of the south], who claim Coele-Syria and Palestine as the dowry of Cleopatra, the late queen-mother, Antiochus marches against Egypt” (pp. 255-256, 277-278).

This occurred in 171 B.C. It was then that his nephew (Ptolemy Philometor) attacked him with a “great army.” However, Ptolemy’s officers betrayed him to Antiochus and he lost the battle (vs. 23-25).

In 174 B.C., Antiochus had joined his young nephew Ptolemy at a feast. Antiochus feigned support for Ptolemy against his brother, Euergetes II, in a case of mutual deceit (vs. 26-27).

The Abomination of Desolation

Next, Antiochus decided to attack and slaughter as many Jews as possible. Upon returning from Egypt in 168 B.C., with “great riches,” he sacked the Temple at Jerusalem and took the golden vessels from it—all as part of his planned genocide of the Jews. He turned back toward Egypt, this time without similar success, because Ptolemy Philometor had secured assistance from Rome (vs. 28-29).

The Roman commander, Popilius, brought his fleet of ships to attack Antiochus. Popilius secured surrender on his own terms, which included leaving Egypt after returning Cyprus to Egypt. This caused Antiochus, once again, to vent his anger against Judea (the Jews) as he was returning to Antioch. This “indignation against the holy covenant” offered favor to any Jews who would *renounce* their beliefs and practices (vs. 30).

Antiochus dispatched troops to Palestine one year later, in 167 B.C., with terrible results for all who fell in his path. He destroyed the Temple and its sanctuary—doing away with the daily sacrifice

(described in Daniel 8:11, 24), while setting up an image, the abomination of *desolation*, directly on the altar of the Temple—thus defiling it, or making it *desolate*! (There are those who attempt to portray this verse as having been fulfilled at the time the Dome of the Rock was built on the Temple site, over eight centuries later, in the seventh century A.D. For this to be true, *all* of the verses that have been explained to this point would require some *other* equally plausible explanation to “work” with the precision we have seen every step of the way thus far. This would also apply to all the verses that follow verse 31.) Antiochus Epiphanes placed the “abomination that makes desolate” in the Temple in 167 B.C. (vs. 31).

Antiochus’ prophetic fulfillment of this verse is a great “type” of a *latter day* fulfillment to occur in *our time*. Luke 21:20 makes plain that Jerusalem will be left in “desolation” by “armies” that will “surround” and destroy it. The gravity of this prophecy will be addressed in more detail at the end of this section. However, it is important for the reader to recognize that God often uses *duality* to show the world, through prior similar events, exactly what He intends to do again—to *repeat*—usually in a far *greater way*, in the *future*.

This is an absolutely vital key to understanding the meaning of *all Bible prophecy*!

Christ and the Apostles Enter the Prophecy

The first part of verse 32 describes Antiochus’ attempt to destroy the Jewish religion. He actually outlawed both the daily sacrifice and the daily ministrations of the Temple through a system of flattery (with favors) any Jews who would renounce their beliefs.

It is critical to understand that, *from the middle of verse thirty-two*, the prophecy shifts forward to the time of the New Testament Church. We have watched each step of this prophecy unfold through two centuries of time. The time setting now fast-forwards approximately 200 years to depict true Christians, through the next 2,000 years, especially in the late stages of this age, “even to the *time of the end*: because it is yet for *a time appointed*” (vs. 35). Notice that verse 32 speaks of “people that do *know their God* shall be *strong* and do *exploits* [great works].” Verse 33 continues, “they that understand among the people shall instruct many.”

At this point, many theologians and commentaries note that the highly detailed, precisely-fulfilled, verse-by-verse story appears to come to an *abrupt end* with this verse. But this is not true!

These two portions of verses picture two entirely different time settings—the first being a *type* of the latter. Certainly Antiochus did “corrupt by flatteries” a great many Jews. The latter part of verse 32 speaks of the time of the Maccabees, who resisted Antiochus’ pattern of corruption and slaughter. They represented a *type* of what Christ and the apostles would begin to do when Christ built His Church (Matt. 16:18).

Christians are supposed to be “strong” and should always be prepared to “instruct *many*”—because they “understand” what God is doing in His Plan on Earth! Of course, Christ and the apostles certainly fulfilled these verses toward *many*.

Daniel specifically records that at the time of the end (12:10), “none of the wicked shall understand; *but the wise shall understand.*” The entirety of Daniel 12 is a continuation of this end-time setting—established from here forward. (Our booklet *Are These the Last Days?* discusses this in greater detail.)

The latter part of verse 33 is a picture of the martyrdom of Christ and all of the apostles except John. For true Christians, persecution and martyrdom continued into the Middle Ages. (For those who have grown lukewarm, this will occur again before Christ returns.)

Verses 34-35 are a clear, powerful description of the path of God’s true people from the time the New Testament Church was founded all the way to the present. Notice: “Now when they shall fall, they shall be [helped] with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with *flatteries*. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to *try* them, and to *purge*, and to *make* them *white*, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.” (This verse should be compared with Revelation 12:6, 11, 13-17.)

Verse 36 describes the king of the north during the early centuries of the New Testament Church. From 65 B.C. forward, the Roman emperor (king of the north) controlled the Holy Land (Judea). Each Roman emperor certainly did “exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god,” by requiring all his subjects to worship him—and he even required sacrifices to be offered to him, like he was a god! Roman emperors *did* act as though they were gods.

They *did* speak against the true God and persecuted His true servants—Christians—for many hundreds of years.

Verse 37 shows how Roman kings, prior to A.D. 476, had worshipped idols. History records that Roman emperors required their subjects to worship them as gods!

Verse 38 describes how the entire Roman Empire *did* “honor the god of forces [margin, “munitions”].” The Roman army *did* develop into the most powerful war machine in history to that time, and the empire amassed gold, silver, jewelry, etc. From Justinian’s reign, in A.D. 554, when the “deadly wound” of Revelation 13 “was healed” (after a 78-year period from A.D. 476, when three northern barbarian tribes had swept into and temporarily controlled Rome), the civil emperors in Rome *did* begin to honor (with power, gold and silver) a god that had been unknown to their ancestors or “fathers.”

This “god” held a *high religious office* and received great deference from Roman emperors.

Through these emperors, this high religious office controlled or “ruled over many” and had great power and wealth given to it. Carefully compare this portion of the prophecy with Revelation 17:4-5 and 18:3 and 16, where this religious power is described as “BABYLON” and “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” who “fornicates” with the “kings” and “merchants of the earth” (vs. 38-39)!

The Time of the End

Verse 40 plainly uses the term “at the time of the end.” It then makes reference to “the king of the south shall *push* at him,” while it explains that “the king of the north shall come against him like a *whirlwind*...” What does this mean? Who are these kings? Who is this end-time king of the south?

Anciently, it was Egypt. Rome seized Egypt and made it a province. Today, Egypt does not have a king and is a modern republic. During the intervening centuries, there has been no *great* king of the south. However, recall that Ptolemy III Euergetes did seize part of Ethiopia, as the king of the south in Egypt, in 247-222 B.C.

Both Rawlinson and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th edition) explain that Egypt and Ethiopia were governed together several different times. Ethiopia was the *only part* of the territory controlled by the king of the south that remained independent until the twentieth century.

The King of the South is Ethiopia

Once again, *only* Ethiopia continued and remained independent in East Africa from the time of the Roman Empire. Therefore, no other country or government could fit as the king of the south—i.e., by having been a part of the ancient land controlled by the “king of the south.” Remember, verse 40 explains that the setting is the time of the end. The king of the south “push[es]” toward the north—or Rome. This occurred in 1895. At that time, about 10,000 men, under the Ethiopian King Menelik, came against the Italian army led by General Baratieri. It should be noted that Eritrea (north of Ethiopia) belonged to Italy, while southeast of Ethiopia was Italian Somaliland.

One year later, in 1896, the Italian General Baratieri attempted to defend Eritrea against the Ethiopian attack. Over 11,000 soldiers were either killed or taken prisoner. The greatly outnumbered and inexperienced Italian army was virtually destroyed in a battle fought over rugged, mountainous terrain.

Italy never forgot this defeat and vowed revenge.

In 1927, Mussolini determined that he would attack Ethiopia in eight years (1935), at a point forty years after the defeat. He followed through, and this did occur in 1935! Again, notice verse 40, in its reference to Mussolini’s attack: “...and the king of the north shall come against him like a *whirlwind*, with *chariots*, and with *horsemen*, and with *many ships*; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and *pass over*.”

A whirlwind is the equivalent of a tornado, which is a powerful storm that drops out of the sky. Mussolini *did*, in fact, bring a large air force to attack Ethiopia. Of course, his “chariots” were modern tanks and other armaments. The “many ships” were part of an armada carrying over 100,000 soldiers to the battle. Verse 40 ends with an amazing statement—it describes this great force as “pass[ing] over.”

Just as God foretold, Mussolini withdrew and did not completely finish his attack. This is because God has reserved one final great leader who will arise in Europe and complete this prophecy! We have now arrived at our precise point in time when the verses that follow verse 40 are those that are *yet to be fulfilled*—while all verses preceding and through verse 40, are *already fulfilled* and have become established *facts of history*!

May all who read the next five verses understand their message for our time!

Final Coming Revival of The Roman Empire

Many Bible prophecies reveal that there is yet coming one *final* resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire—when a *final* king of the north will seize the world stage for a short period prior to the Return of Christ (Dan. 8:23-25). The world is now moving toward this *final* terrible time of great trouble. This dictator will gather ten other kings (Rev. 17:12-13), who will give their power and allegiance to him, in this last revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

Verse 41 says of this king, “he shall enter also into the *glorious land*.” This entrance into the glorious land, or Holy Land, has not yet happened! The prophecy continues, “And *many* countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” (Incidentally, Moab and Ammon comprise the modern Middle Eastern nation of Jordan. Many prophecies indicate that God *may* spare this region because of His plan for a place to protect His true servants.)

Since verse 42 says, “Egypt shall not escape” this time, Egypt could *not* be the king of the south. Then, verse 43 says, “the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.” The king of the north will, once again, control these two countries, which Italy lost control over at the end of World War II.

Verse 44 makes reference to “*tidings* [news] out of the *east* and out of the *north* shall trouble him.” Russia and the Orient lie north and east, respectively, from where the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire will be established in the Middle East.

Remember, prophetically, God uses Jerusalem as the geographic point from which to reference any direction. The king of the north will hear some troubling news and Russia, coupled with many nations from the east, will join the war, centered in the Middle East.

Verse 45 summarizes the end of this longest of all Bible prophecies. The king of the north (the final ruler over the last revival of the Holy Roman Empire) will sweep into the modern land of Israel, “the holy mountain,” to establish his religious headquarters. Another prophecy, in Zechariah 14:2, says “the city [Jerusalem] shall be taken.” The rest of this verse must be read to fully understand the horror that occurs when Jerusalem is taken and conquered.

Take a moment to read Luke 21:20, where Jerusalem's *desolation* comes from *armies* that surround it. Zechariah 14:3 continues, explaining what ultimately happens: "Then shall the LORD go forth, and *fight against those nations*, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand *in that day* upon the Mount of Olives which is before *Jerusalem* on the east" (vs. 4). In the end, Jesus Christ destroys the armies that destroyed Jerusalem!

When speaking of the final beast and false prophet, Daniel 11:45 concludes, "Yet he [the beast] shall come to his end, and none shall help him." (Also note Daniel 8:25.) Zechariah 14:3 explains that Christ will deal with him—as well as with the false prophet. Revelation 19:19-20 and Zechariah 14:12 give more explanation to the terrible end that will come to these two infamous people!

Examining what has already been fulfilled in Daniel 11 would have been incomplete without also examining what it warns is *yet* to occur before the Return of Jesus Christ. If God has consistently and accurately foretold already-fulfilled events, *prior to their fulfillment*, then we must not ignore all of the *other* events and trends that His Word foretells in advance. What HAS happened on schedule carries enormous implications in regard to what WILL yet happen in the future—and right on schedule!

One Final, Unusual Prophecy

There is one last prophecy that needs to be examined. It is God's personal challenge to YOU on a specific matter wherein HE SAYS THAT YOU CAN PROVE HIM. It is the remarkable prophecy concerning the biblical principle of tithing found at the end of the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi asks, "Will a man rob God?" (Mal. 3:8). Be careful that you do not say that this is an *Old Testament* scripture with no effect today.

Did you realize that the *New Testament* Church is built directly on top of the prophets? I never heard this in Sunday school or in the church of my youth. Ephesians 2:19-20 says, "you are...fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the *household of God*; and are *built upon* the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." There it is—the true Church—God's Church!—stands directly on a foundation that includes the prophets! What is written in the prophets is instruction to God's New Testament Church!

We can now read a powerful series of verses. The first two set the stage for a verbal exchange between God and His people. Notice: “For I am the LORD, *I change not*...Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from *Mine ordinances*, and have *not* kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:6-7). The exchange then shifts to a rhetorical question from the people to God: “But you said, Wherein shall we return?” Now God answers with His own question: “Will a man rob God? *Yet you have robbed Me.*” The context returns to another rhetorical question from the people: “But you say, Wherein have we robbed You?” God’s answer is: “IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS” (vs. 7-8)! When people do not *pay* God His tithes—and do not *give* Him *His offerings*—He considers them to be robbing Him. Robbing is thievery—stealing! Not only is it stealing, but it is stealing FROM GOD!

Few things could be more serious!

Stealing from God brings consequences. In the next verse, God continues, “*You are cursed with a curse*: for you have robbed Me, even this *whole nation.*” This statement is directed to all the modern-day nations that descended from the twelve tribes that comprised ancient Israel. Generally, these nations are the democratic nations of Western Europe, and the primarily English-speaking nations of the world—the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

These nations are under a growing curse directly in part for their sin of stealing God’s tithes. Remember that Abraham and Isaac were *not* Israelites, yet were required to pay tithes. Therefore, all nations suffer from the curse of not obeying God’s financial laws.

This world is based on the “get” way rather than the “give” way, which is God’s way! People constantly strive to “get” more for themselves. This violates the Tenth Commandment, which forbids coveting. Notice what God says of His people, and of all nations, in a prophecy directed to those alive at the end of the age: “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them *every one is given to covetousness*; and from the prophet even unto the priest *every one deals falsely*” (Jer. 6:13).

Two chapters later, there is an almost identical statement, except that God also warns of the horrific punishment He will bring because of this worldwide attitude.

The subject of Malachi is God’s coming punishment on the entire world during the Day of the Lord—called the Day of God’s

Wrath. This theme is found in nearly all of the Minor Prophets—the last twelve, short books of the Old Testament. See Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-14; 3:1-21; Amos 5:18-20; and Zephaniah 1:7-18, among other places. Malachi continues the theme of the Day of the Lord and actually pictures tithing as the key to a repentant attitude.

Consider!

How could God punish the nations of the world for robbery, *if the tithing law is not in effect today?* This would make no sense and would make God terribly unjust if He did this.

The context of Malachi continues with an offer from God. It is directed both at the modern peoples of Israel and to any single *individual* who chooses to take God at His word. Notice: “Bring you *all the tithes* into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and PROVE ME now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, *if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*” (vs. 10).

This is a promise! Pay Almighty God His tithes and He will bless you beyond what you have room to receive! Will you believe this?

The patriarch Jacob believed God and this is what he expected, once he began to pay His tithes. Jacob was prepared to tithe—if God would provide for, bless and guide him. His life became a testimony to the fact that God keeps His Word, if men obey Him. (Read our free booklet *End All Your Financial Worries*, to learn more about tithing.)

Paying God’s tithes works! As shown, there is a cause and effect relationship that the tithepayer has come to understand. I have seen demonstrated, as have a great many others, the powerful proof of tithing. It is a law as surely as is the law of gravity. It “keeps” those that keep it and “breaks” those that break it. Granted, this is not acceptable proof to the avowed skeptic, who is not willing to “prove” God—and who would never part with what he thinks is *his* money. Since he has no interest in obeying God on any *other* point, the skeptic is certainly not about to give ten percent of his income to enter into a test he has no interest in proving correct!

Will *you* prove God on this point? Are *you* willing to see if paying God’s tithes “pays off”? This extraordinary proof of prophecy is one that you can understand by looking at conditions in the world around you and one where you can run your own test in order to come to your own conclusion.

Summation

You have seen many different proofs of the Bible. This section has conclusively established its divine authority, and this just primarily from prophecies that have been fulfilled exactly as foretold. Individually and collectively, they represent the greatest single proof—actually, many separate proofs within the one overall enormous proof of prophecy—that the One who purports to have inspired the Bible actually did so.

But then there is the question of how—through whom—God recorded, compiled and preserved His Word...

SECTION III

How We Got the Bible

Is the Bible complete without the Apocrypha or other obscure writings? Is there sufficient evidence to prove whether these documents belong in God's Word? Many facts about the assembly and preservation of the Bible show God's guiding hand in the entire process. Section III explains the amazing story of how God preserved His Word!

Where did the Bible come from? The previous section made plain that God authored it—but how did we get it in its present form? Is it complete? Many sincerely wonder: Do we have the entire Bible? Some feel that no one can know. Is there any way to prove this?

There are plain answers to these and related questions.

Consider for a moment. Are *you* able to preserve important financial papers that you need to keep? Can *families* preserve treasured photographs, protected in an album? Are *companies* able to preserve records vital to their existence? Can the *National Archives* protect important documents and artifacts from America's history? Is the *Internet* capable of preserving virtually EVERYTHING?

The answer to all these questions is "Of course!"

If God can create the universe—and all life within it—surely He can preserve His inspired Word. Yet, most seem to think that God is less capable of preserving what is vital to Him than are human beings!

The design and development of the Bible is a fascinating story. This section will explore in essential detail the *canonization* (the binding and confirming) of those books that God intended to preserve for all time as His Word—Holy Scripture.

The Parameters

Three separate areas need to be understood and appreciated to answer the opening series of questions. We will present the overwhelming evidence in the following general format:

- (1) The design and layout of the Old Testament (including canonization).
- (2) The design and layout of the New Testament (including canonization).
- (3) The study of the Apocrypha and other documents not canonized.

Part 1: The Design and Layout of the Old Testament

The Jews preserved the Hebrew Scriptures. Romans 3:1-2 tells us: “What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

The oracles of God consist of the Sacred Scriptures and the Sacred Calendar. To find the source of the *true* Scriptures, we must look to the Jews, whose leaders were commissioned to both preserve and protect them.

How certain can we be that God is able to preserve His Word for us today—over 1,900 years after the final canonization of the New Testament? Christ answers this in Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

Notice another statement by Jesus that expands on this principle: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17-18).

The phrase, “the law or the prophets,” is a short term for the Hebrew Sacred Scriptures, as we will see shortly. Christ did not come to destroy the Scriptures, or nullify the Law of God, but to fulfill them—the prophecies of His human existence and sacrifice.

Notice the following verse, which indicates that Christ realized that the Jews possessed the proper Scriptures, prophesying a specific fulfillment: “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?...But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” (Matt. 26:54, 56).

Acts 17:10-11 shows *where* the brethren looked in order to find the true Scriptures: “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming there went *into the synagogue of the Jews*. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so.”

Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman, had always been familiar with the true Scriptures: “And that from a child you have known the *holy scriptures*, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:15-16).

Many other verses could be cited to reinforce this fact, but the point is clear. Every synagogue possessed exact replicas or copies of the texts found in the Temple. Even the term “holy scriptures” literally meant “Sacred Scriptures.” Sacred refers to the Holy Place of the Temple. The term “holy scriptures” is actually translated “Temple Scriptures” in the Englishman’s Bible. Again, *all* the sets of Scriptures in the synagogues were replicas of the texts found in the Temple.

The Arrangement of the Books

The King James Version and virtually all other more modern translations list 39 individual books in the Old Testament. These books *do* represent the entirety of the Old Testament. But the one problem with them is the order in which they are found.

Since these books comprise the official Hebrew canonized Scriptures, this is where we should look to establish the correct order. First, notice that Christ told His disciples, after His Resurrection, that Bible verses foretold of His life and mission: “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the *law of Moses*, and *in the prophets*, and *in the psalms*, concerning Me.

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

As Luke wrote of this account, he was specifying which Scriptures—the Hebrew canonized Scriptures—Christ pointed out as His inspired Word. They foretold of His life and fulfillment of many prophecies concerning Him.

Luke was specifying this information to the gentile readers of his Greek manuscripts.

The Hebrew canonized Scriptures are emphasized here in contrast to such counterfeit documents as the Septuagint, written in the Greek language. (More will be covered about the Septuagint later.) Accurate and valid copies of the Hebrew Scriptures translated into the Greek language *did* exist in the first century.

Notice that Christ Himself identified the Hebrew Scriptures by the following terms: (1) The Law of Moses, (2) the Prophets, and (3) the Psalms.

These are the three major divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures—the Old Testament. They were arranged according to the recorded words of Jesus Christ in Luke 24:44-45.

Before defining these three sections in detail, keep in mind that the arrangement is different than we find in the Kings James Version and other modern translations of this time.

The reason for this change in order is that the Roman Catholic Church based its Latin Vulgate on the Egyptian Septuagint Version, written in Greek. Unlike the Jews, these mainly Samaritan religionists had no commission to preserve the Scriptures as the oracles of God. Therefore, they did not fear the God of Israel, and proceeded to group the Scriptures as they saw fit. They rearranged the order of the Old Testament books according to subject, ignoring the order according to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The arrangement we find in most all bibles at this time reflects the rearrangement by these non-Jewish counterfeits. The order of the 39 books is radically dismantled. Yet we shall see their original placement and come to appreciate *why* that order was important.

Note what Flavius Josephus states in regard to the number of books in the Hebrew Scriptures: “For we [the Jews] have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing and contradicting one another, but only 22 books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine” (*Against Apion, Book I, Section VIII*).

The following scholars associated with the Catholic movement also publicly acknowledged that there were 22 books to the Hebrew Scriptures: Origen (A.D. 210), Athanasius (365), Cyril of Jerusalem (386), and Jerome (410).

We first list the books of the Law, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch:

The Law of Moses (5 books):

Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy

Note that in this first section of the Law, the order is not changed. The radical changes appear in the second (the Prophets) and third sections (the Psalms or Writings).

Now, we list the original order of the Prophets. Note how the books are divided and sub-divided:

The Former Prophets (2 books):

Joshua-Judges (combined into one); Samuel-Kings (combined into one)

The Latter Prophets (4 books):

Three major prophets (each one book): Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; “The Twelve” prophets (the following texts combined into one): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Finally, the third division known as the Psalms. This division is also referred to as the Writings. It is divided into three parts:

The Former Poetic Books (3 books):

Psalms; Proverbs; Job

The Megillot or Festival Books (5 books):

Song of Solomon; Ruth; Lamentations; Ecclesiastes; Esther

The Latter Restoration Books (3 books):

Daniel; Ezra-Nehemiah (combined into one); Chronicles (combined into one)

This original order is completely chronological. This will be more thoroughly appreciated once we study the canonization and other historical aspects involved.

The Significance of the Numbers

There is another aspect of the significance of the number 22. Sextus Senensis, a Jewish scholar, A.D. 1520, is credited with the following statement: "As with the Hebrews there are 22 letters, in which ALL that can be said and written are comprehended, so there are 22 books in which are contained ALL there can be known and uttered of divine things" (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, Green, p. 87).

With the significance of the 22 books or scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a type of an alphabetical "acrostic" most likely paralleled those 22 books. An acrostic exists when 22 verses each begin with a word spelled with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each letter (beginning with the first) continues in order all through the alphabet in sequence. In other words, the first letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the first verse. Then the second letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the second verse, and so on. The parts of an acrostic can be single verses each, or sets of verses, or possibly chapters or even books.

An example of a complete acrostic is Psalm 119. Here, eight verses are grouped together into 22 sets of verses. The first letter of all eight verses of each set is the same letter of the alphabet. Thus the first eight verses begin with the first letter, the next eight verses all begin with the second letter of the alphabet, and so on. Not only is this poetic chapter a perfect and complete acrostic, astoundingly, the syllables of each verse have to perfectly match each other, because it was set to music.

Psalm 119 covers the subject of the Law of God being perfect and complete. Thus, a perfect and complete acrostic is used to emphasize that completeness. Every single verse of this chapter in the original Hebrew mentions the Law of God, using terms such as law, precepts, judgments, statutes, commandments, etc. The eight verses per meter, times the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, equals 176. There are precisely 176 verses in Psalms 119.

Together, Psalms 111 and 112 form a complete acrostic showing that God will completely redeem His people. Both chapters contain 10 verses each, but the 10th verse of both chapters contains two sections.

The way our Bibles are divided into chapters and verses does not always properly coincide with the method or intent with which these

were written (see inset). Proverbs 31:10-31 contains 22 verses forming another complete and perfect acrostic. These verses describe a complete and perfect woman. Another complete acrostic is found in the book of Lamentations. This acrostic emphasizes the complete destruction upon all Israel.

A broken acrostic runs through Psalms 9 and 10. Here, seven letters seem to be purposely left out. This is said to represent the broken condition that will occur on Earth during the time frame that Psalms 9 and 10 portray in the prophetic sense.

During Christ's time (as documented by Josephus and various others), the Hebrew Scriptures consisted of 22 books. As a point of interest, when one adds the 22 books of these Scriptures to the 27 books of the New Testament, a total of 49 books results. To the Jews, the number of 49 (seven times seven) represents absolute completion.

(Also, if every one of the Old Testament books are counted individually—and the Psalms are counted as five because of their natural division—the Old Testament total is 43 books. Adding this to the New Testament total of 27 yields the number 70, which is ten times God's number of completion or perfection.)

By the second century, many Jews became somewhat envious of the significance of "their" Scriptures being combined with the New Testament to give a total of 49 books. At that time, the Jews adjusted the order of the Hebrew Scriptures to increase the number to 24. This was done by dividing Joshua-Judges into two books and by dividing Samuel-Kings into two books, giving a new total of 24 books (see *The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures* [Outline], E.L. Martin, pp. 9, 12).

This slight rearrangement by the Jews gave a different number, but the books within a division were never moved to another division.

Before and during this time, the Jews had complete disgust for the Egyptian Septuagint Version, which totally reshuffled the books of the second and third divisions (the Prophets and the Writings).

As mentioned before, this is where the Catholics inherited their erroneous order of the Old Testament and passed it on to us today in the same distorted order, through the King James Version and most all other versions available today.

Some have observed that many Hebrew Bibles bear the label TANAK (or often TANAKH) on the front cover and have asked what

this means. This name is actually derived from the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures:

TORAH is the name given to the division on the Law of God—first 5 books.

NEBEE-EEM is the name for the Prophets division.

KETHUVEEN is the Writings division.

By taking the initial letters of the three titles (T,N,K) they form the word TANAK. The Bible of the Jews was named for these three major divisions. This shows their acceptance of the true divisions, as opposed to various corrupted versions like the Septuagint.

History of Old Testament Canonization

Moses compiled and wrote all five books of the Law (Pentateuch) during the 40 years in the wilderness. He used pre-Flood documents and other sources to compile the book of Genesis.

Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus were written during the very first years in the wilderness. Numbers was written as the continuous record of the journey through the wilderness. Of course, at the outset, Moses never anticipated that the journey would last 40 years. The book of Deuteronomy was written during the very last months at the end of the journey.

Just before his death, Moses presented to the priesthood of Israel the five books he had compiled and written (Deut. 31:9). These original Scriptures were stored in the Ark of the Covenant. Under authority of the high priest, scribes made copies of these scrolls.

All the kings of Israel were required to copy the entire Pentateuch, or five books of the Law. This precept was added by Samuel and observed by David, Solomon, and later by most of the kings of Judah.

Next, the Book of Joshua/Judges was written by Samuel. This book was classified with the prophets primarily because it was written by a prophet—Samuel. This work was primarily historic, but laid the groundwork for the following books of Samuel/Kings and the Latter Prophets. Samuel established the prophetic order with his “company of the prophets” throughout Israel (I Sam. 10:5, 10; 19:20).

Some of the historic facts from Joshua were most likely compiled from sources possibly generated by Joshua and some of the loyal servants of God that followed after him. By the same token,

much of the detailed information of the history of the earlier kings of Israel and Judah was most likely recorded by Elijah and later compiled and written by Isaiah for the section of Kings in the Book of Samuel/Kings. After all, who was more qualified to write of the experiences of Elijah than Elijah himself?

Elijah carried on with the Prophetic Order of schools in Israel that Samuel had inaugurated over 200 years earlier (II Kgs. 2:3, 5; 4:38). One of the very purposes of these schools must have been to document historic events and transcribe previous records to be compiled at some later time into canonized manuscripts. Elisha and others associated with these schools for the prophets certainly contributed to the historic records after the time of Elijah.

Obviously, the books of the major and minor prophets were written by the authors to whom the books are attributed. These prophets wrote and sealed their own works, to be added to the Scriptures during subsequent times of canonization.

King David wrote and canonized much of the Psalms. He had assembled all the building materials together with which his son, Solomon, would build the Temple after his death. David established the 24 (2-week) courses for the priests and for the Levites and singers, as well. He wrote two of the five books. These first two books consisted of the first 72 chapters of Psalms, the official Psalms used for the Temple service by the singers.

The Psalms dedicated to Asaph and to Korah were also written by David and dedicated to these outstanding singers. These Psalms would include most of Book 3. Other contributors to the book of Psalms included Moses (author of Psalm 90 and a number of the following Psalms in book 4). More of David's Psalms appear in book 5 along with some of the Psalms of degrees written by Hezekiah.

Solomon compiled and wrote the Proverbs after the time of David. Agur of Proverbs 30 and Lemuel of Proverbs 31 both refer to Solomon. Lemuel means "the king who rejected God." The writing of Solomon late in his life reflected lessons from much bitter experience. This wise old monarch was offering sage advice from having grievously sinned against God. He advised submission to God (Ecc. 12:13)—hardly the conduct of someone hostile and unrepentant.

Though Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were written by Solomon, these books, along with other writings, were not canonized until the time of Ezra, as we will soon examine.

The Role of Hezekiah, Isaiah and Jeremiah

During the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and Isaiah the prophet (this was during Isaiah's younger years), the threat of attack and captivity by Assyria was very real. Hezekiah and Isaiah proceeded to canonize certain books for the remnants of Israel and Judah to look for proper guidance, in case all religious services were suspended by an Assyrian invasion and captivity.

At this time, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had already been recently taken into captivity. Much of Judah had later been taken into captivity by these Assyrians (II Kgs. 18:13). These Jews were taken to Eastern Europe where many still live to this day (*Compendium of World History*, Vol. 2, Hoeh, Chap. 4). Only the Jews of Jerusalem were spared along with other Jews who were able to find refuge behind Jerusalem's walls. Jerusalem was spared due to God's favor toward King Hezekiah (II Kgs. 18:5-7).

Each of the 15 Psalms of degrees (chapters 120-134) coincides with one of the 15 steps leading to the Temple. The singers would advance one step daily with each of the Psalms of degrees at a designated time of the year in their worship service. Of these Psalms, five were attributed to David, another to Solomon, and scholars attribute the other nine to Hezekiah, who also canonized much of the Psalms. Isaiah 38:9-21 shows an extensive psalm by Hezekiah. Certainly he was gifted and sufficiently qualified to be used to compose some of the Psalms.

Hezekiah established a "tri-grammaton" symbol, which indicated that a book of the Scriptures was officially bound or confirmed—canonized. This was continually used to seal canonized books after his time.

Later during the time of King Josiah, Judah was under threat of invasion and captivity as had occurred during the time of Hezekiah about 85 years earlier. Josiah was assisted and advised by certain servants of God, including Jeremiah. This somewhat paralleled the time of Hezekiah, in which he was assisted and advised by Isaiah.

Another similarity was that both Hezekiah and Josiah had been preceded by very wicked fathers. When both ascended to the throne, they re-established the true worship of God in Judah and both reopened and restored the Temple that had been closed and defiled by their evil fathers.

During Josiah's time, the threat came from Babylon. Yet, Josiah besought God and peace was promised to Judah as long as he lived (II Chron. 34:27-28). He was much beloved of God for his righteous zeal (II Kgs. 23:25). During this time, additional scripture was canonized primarily by Jeremiah. This canonization involved most of the minor prophets.

Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations after Josiah was killed in battle—much to the dismay of Jeremiah and all Judah. Lamentations is indeed prophetic of what the modern descendants of Israel are yet to suffer, although written in the shadows of the imminent invasion by Babylon. The book of Jeremiah was not completed until well after the fall of Jerusalem.

During the captivity of Judah in Babylon, Daniel was in an exalted position of power and had authority to preserve Hebrew Scriptures as they were taken to Babylon.

Most likely, there were a number of copies in addition to the Temple Scriptures. The various references that Daniel made to the Scriptures were authentic, as he had access to them and carefully examined them (Dan. 9:2, 11).

The Crucial Role of Ezra

Ezra was the priest and scribe who gathered *all* the books and made the *final* canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some of the historical background of that time will be covered shortly, but first we should focus upon some of the editing that Ezra and others made to clarify certain portions of Scripture.

Ezra inserted some editorial notes to clarify to the Jews of his time the current names of certain towns mentioned in the Law. Some of the editorial notes attributed to Ezra are Genesis 14:7, 17; 23:2, 19; 36:31-39.

Moses also inserted some editorial remarks. Some of those attributed to him are Genesis 2:13-14; 12:8. (This was the location where Bethel was yet to be settled.)

Samuel added some important parts to the Law. In I Samuel 10:25, which states, "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD," the term "a book" should be "the book." This indicates that Samuel wrote in a book that already existed. The only book that was laid up before the LORD at that time was the law of Moses.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is the part that Samuel added, dealing with instructions concerning a king over Israel. Ezra later inserted editorial comments in Deuteronomy 34:5-6, and 10 pertaining to Moses after the time of his death.

As stated above, Ezra was responsible for the final canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures. It was understood in the first century that the prophetic spirit in that era had ended with Ezra.

Ezra came to Jerusalem and Judea after the Babylonian captivity, where over 40,000 Jews had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and other cities. The Temple had been rebuilt by about 515 B.C. Most of these returning exiles were not zealous to obey God. Many had intermarried with the surrounding idolatrous gentiles. In about 457 B.C., God sent Ezra to rectify the situation.

Ezra 7:10 summarizes: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Ezra came with 2,000 priests, Levites, and servants of the Temple to restore the worship of God. This process of turning the Jews back to God took about 13 years.

Nehemiah, who was sent to be governor over Judea, assisted Ezra in restoring the true worship in Judea. Ezra and Nehemiah summoned all the Jewish leaders together to sign a special covenant that they would henceforth obey the laws of God (Neh. 10:28-39). However, the high priest Eliashib was not present at this gathering.

This meeting established the governing assembly in Judea known as the Great Assembly. It was headed by Ezra, Nehemiah and all the principle priests and elders of Judea. This 120-member assembly also convened to establish which books were to be canonized. They assisted Ezra in his responsibility of final canonization during the years that followed. After Ezra's death, the high priest was to preside over the Great Assembly.

Eliashib, who never met with the assembly, disagreed with Ezra and the assembly. Eliashib had other allegiances (Neh. 13:4-7). His grandson, Manasseh, was married to a Samaritan princess. This represented a political-religious alliance between the top families of Samaria and Judea.

Manasseh was excommunicated from Judea. He relocated to Samaria, where Samballat (his wife's father) made him high priest of the Samaritans. One of the points of the above-mentioned covenant was for those who married gentile wives to put them away.

Manasseh refused to give up his Samaritan wife. This event was the real beginning of the Samaritan form of religion in Israel, and the beginning of reasons for later antagonism that developed between Samaritans and Jews. Manasseh had a temple built on Mt. Gerizim (a counterfeit of the Temple on Mt. Zion). He also rejected all the Hebrew Scriptures except the Pentateuch—the five books of the Law.

Ezra and the Great Assembly later divided the Hebrew Scriptures into the 3 major divisions and 22 individual books. Ezra changed the Jewish script to square script, as had been used in Babylon, in order for Jews to recognize Samaritan schemes to pass their counterfeit writings as canonized Scripture. The Temple Scriptures and eventually all copies of it were changed to square script.

Since the Samaritans had also corrupted the Sacred Calendar, Ezra changed the names of the months to the names of those the Jews learned in Babylon. Thus, Abib became Nisan, Zif became Iyar, etc. The Babylonian names for the months of the calendar have been retained to this day.

Chronicles was written by Ezra. Isaiah had long since written the Book of the Kingdoms (Samuel/Kings). The outlook of the book of Chronicles was from a priestly perspective. Ezra emphasizes throughout this book that Jerusalem has always been the headquarters of God's government. This was emphasized to show that the Samaritans were falsely claiming they were the center of God's religion.

Ezra references 15 secular sources to validate his claim, while the Book of the Kingdoms gave hardly any outside secular sources. Ezra, along with Nehemiah, took careful measures to counter the deceitful tactics of the Samaritans by canonizing the Hebrew Scriptures (source of the Old Testament). Likewise, the Samaritans' descendants, under Simon Magus, counterfeited the New Testament, and attempted to have it canonized—without success.

How do we know that we have the same Hebrew Scriptures that Ezra canonized? After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, preservation became the responsibility of Jewish religious leaders instead of the state. Several Jewish sects made sure that the others did not change the text.

In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., some of the Jews tried to replace the official text with illegitimate ones. To stop this effort, the officials restored the old authoritative manuscripts handed down since pre-Roman days. These were made the standard text—the

Masoretic Text. This is the same one followed today and the set of scriptures that Ezra canonized.

Part 2: The Design and Layout of the New Testament

The apostles and other disciples of Christ recorded the New Testament. Certain apostles canonized it. Notice the prophecy in Isaiah 8:13-17:

“Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. *Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.* And I will wait upon the LORD, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him.”

Isaiah 7:14, 8:8 and 9:6 all show the general context of the above-quoted verses. They speak clearly and undeniably of the time of Christ. His disciples were to bind up the testimony and seal the Law. This they did. Christ delivered the New Testament, yet He required His servants to record—and to bind up and seal—that written record.

The New Testament was written to those “called out” ones (John 6:44, 65), who were to grow in character and qualify for rulership in the coming kingdom of God. It was not a commission to a nation, or for preservation in the same sense as the Old Testament had been.

The real identity and mission of Christ and the concept of called out ones becoming part of the God Family and ruling with Christ “threw” the Jews “for a loop,” as seen in Isaiah 8:13-17. Such a concept was so foreign to them that they considered it *blasphemy* (John 10:31-38). They had been molded into a certain pattern of thought and outlook regarding the meaning of the Scriptures and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Only the Jews who were part of those called out and whose minds God had opened were able to understand. Of course, all of the very first called out ones—of God’s Church—were Jews, as those from other tribes of Israel and gentiles began to be called shortly thereafter.

At first, the apostles believed that Christ would return in their lifetime and that canonization of the gospels, Acts, and a number of

letters would not be needed. After all, the “70 weeks” prophecy of Daniel 9 gave no indication that the final half of the “week” would be delayed nearly 2,000 years.

Besides, the servants of that time might not have understood the seven times delay upon Israel, Judah or upon Babylon. (Yet, there was no need to understand this at that early stage of time.)

Also, the Olivet prophecy, described in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, sounded as if it applied to the Jews of that time. Jerusalem *had* been surrounded by armies. Terrible warfare and suffering *had* occurred, and it appeared that the first four seals had been (and were being) fulfilled.

The apostle Paul thought that Christ would return in his lifetime (I Thes. 4:15-16; II Thes. 2:1-2; I Cor. 15:51-52). Eventually, those surviving apostles (whether in the Greek and Roman world or dispatched among distant tribes of Israel) realized that Christ would return much later.

Notice the apostle John’s answer to the Roman Emperor Domitian when he questioned him about the reign of Christ: “You [Domitian] shall also reign for many years given you by God, and after you very many others; and when the times of things upon the earth have been fulfilled, out of heaven shall come a King, eternal, true, Judge of the living and the dead...” (*Ante-Nicean Fathers*, Roberts and Donaldson, pp. 560-2).

More About Canonization and Paul’s Letters

Now we turn to particular writings in the New Testament that indicated the apostles were very aware of their responsibility to bind and seal the New Testament. Recognize that in a general sense of the term, all the writers of the Scriptures, both Old Testament (O.T.) and New Testament (N.T.), were called prophets.

Notice the words of the resurrected Christ to those who were slow to understand the significance of events leading up to His miraculous Resurrection: “Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and *all the prophets*, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

Again, in a general sense, Jesus referred to all the writers of the Scriptures as *prophets*.

When the apostle Peter stated, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed...” (II Pet. 1:19), he was not exalting himself and the other apostles above the writers of the Old Testament.

He was well aware that he and the other apostles had been personally tutored by the One who inspired all the other prophets. The “more sure word of prophecy” was a direct reference to Christ, as opposed to His human instruments of that time. Christ had opened up new understanding to His Church—He was the Source of that “more sure word of prophecy.”

Now notice the words of Paul at the conclusion of Romans: “Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (16:25-26).

The “scriptures of the prophets” mentioned here refers to the Old Testament prophets, but also to others, because the revelation to which Paul refers might have been additional knowledge only available when Christ made them “manifest.”

Paul also acknowledged the abundance of the revelations given to him (II Cor. 12:7). He knew that he was to disseminate this understanding to the Church: “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col. 1:25-26).

With full humility, but with a strong sense of reality, Paul could state to the Church, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe” (I Thes. 2:13).

Now note what Peter said regarding Paul’s writings: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other scriptures*, unto their own destruction” (II Pet. 3:15-16).

Paul's letters were referred in context to "the *other* scriptures." Since Peter had canonized many of Paul's letters, he knew firsthand that they were now Scripture. Note that Paul, shortly before his martyrdom, instructed Timothy to bring Mark with him (II Tim. 4:9-11). It was for a specific mission in which he also instructed Timothy to bring "especially the parchments" (vs. 13).

There are strong indications that Mark was dispatched to Babylon with those parchments to present to Peter (I Pet. 5:13), the chief apostle who canonized those very writings of Paul. By that time, Paul had been martyred, but the parchments were already sent to their destination.

Shortly after Peter canonized those parchments—Paul's letters—he too was martyred at the behest of the Roman Emperor Nero. The writings that Peter had canonized up to that time comprised all the writings of the New Testament except what John would later add and canonize.

The Gospels, Acts and Writings of John

The four gospels, as they appear in the King James Version and other versions, are arranged in the correct order. Matthew was written first. Matthew was a Levite, and primarily addressed his gospel to the Jews. Mark was written next. Mark was a companion and an interpreter for Peter. He wrote the account as Peter had proclaimed it—Peter being the eyewitness in this account.

Luke's gospel was written for Greek readers. He was a companion of Paul. Luke also wrote the book of Acts in the Greek language. Since Luke was not an eyewitness, he based his writing upon much diligent research, compiling what a number of apostles and disciples had earlier documented (Luke 1:2). Luke strived to write the things "in order" (vs. 3) and thus establish a chronological order of events.

The fourth gospel (John's) was written after the other three gospels. The others were left in the same order since Peter's canonization. John's gospel was unique from the others, just as Luke's was unique from those that preceded his. John had been away from the area of Judea and the Mediterranean region for about 50 years. He and the other surviving original apostles had been dispatched to the areas of the 12 tribes of Israel where God had called many into His Church.

By the time of A.D. 90, John was the only surviving apostle of the original 12. God had preserved his life for a special mission. Neither Peter nor John himself, nor the others, originally understood why John would live longer or what his mission would be (see John 21:21-23).

John's final mission was multifaceted. First of all, he wrote his gospel. In spite of the observations of Eusebius and other historians, John most likely wrote his gospel when he was in the region of France for about 50 years, well before the 90s A.D. (see our book *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!*, p. 21).

The tone of John's gospel reflects careful forethought and peaceful introspection. It was carefully written over a period of time, most likely well before John returned to the turbulent region of Judea and Asia Minor.

John went to the area of Ephesus, in Asia Minor, after he returned to Judea and found the Temple and Jerusalem long since destroyed. Certainly, John must have been well aware of the Jewish war that had occurred about 20 years before his return to the area.

The Church of Ephesus was the headquarters during the era that bore the very same name. From here, John wrote his general letters to the churches. The tone of these letters reflected a great amount of turbulence mixed with urgency, due to the apostasy, as well as persecution.

Shortly after John arrived and settled at Ephesus, Emperor Domitian began the second imperial persecution (the first was carried out by Nero). John was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, where he received the Revelation and the command to write it down. Christ probably allowed John to be imprisoned to give him the solitude and precious time necessary to carefully document the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This was to be the final book of the New Testament and the entire Bible.

When John was released from prison, he went back to Ephesus. Here, he worked closely with an evangelist (possibly an apostle) named Philip (one of the original deacons) and Polycarp. With the help of Philip, he trained and advised Polycarp and others who would oversee the initial stage of the Smyrna era.

After completing his own writings, John may have revised some of them with editorial comments. But his final important mission was the final canonization of the New Testament. His canonization, like Ezra's, was extremely vital for the preservation of the true Scrip-

tures. Just as Ezra had to canonize the true Scriptures in order to set them apart from Samaritan counterfeits, John had to take measures to protect the true Scriptures from counterfeit writings by the followers of Simon Magus and others of similar persuasion.

Upon his binding and sealing of the New Testament Scriptures, Christ commissioned them to be preserved by an unexpected group. The Church of God, systematically persecuted and hunted down over the centuries, was in no position to preserve these Scriptures.

God used the Greeks to preserve these Scriptures. Unlike the Church of God, the Greeks were not persecuted, but were free to remain in their homeland. Their mission would be to treasure, preserve and copy the New Testament word for word and letter by letter—through the long, dark night of the Middle Ages.

It was not essential for these people to believe or even understand the central message in order to preserve them. God did indeed preserve these Scriptures through the Greek people.

The Proper Arrangement of the New Testament

We have already mentioned that the order of the gospels is the same as presented in modern Bibles. The book of Acts follows next. Then we should come to a section that has been dislocated from its original position—the seven general epistles: James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John and Jude.

The church in the east, in Greek-speaking regions, insisted that the General Epistles appear before Paul's letters. The universal church in the west, headed by Rome, insisted that Paul's letters come first, especially the book of Romans. They opposed anything that was labeled as Jewish or "Judaizing practices." Thus, the objection of the Greek eastern church was overruled in favor of the west, and the general epistles were moved.

Here are some other reasons the general epistles belong before Paul's letters:

- They were intended for the general Church of God and were not addressed to any specific congregations as were Paul's.
- They mainly contain general information.
- God always sent his servants to the Jews first (Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10). This included Paul.
- All of the authors of the general epistles preceded Paul in the order of time.

- General epistles do give some necessary background to better understand Paul's letters.

Paul's letters are supposed to follow the general letters as established in the original canonization and confirmed by the Greeks, who were to preserve the N.T. Scriptures. Paul's letters generally contain stronger meat and more specific instructions. The pastoral epistles of Timothy, Titus and Philemon are even stronger. Hebrews, written by Paul, was originally rejected by the Catholics because it sounded "too Jewish."

Now we summarize the order of the New Testament, containing 27 books in 4 major sections:

Gospels and Acts:

Matthew; Mark; Luke; John; Acts

General Epistles:

James; I Peter; II Peter; I John; II John; III John; Jude

Letters to Specific Churches from Paul:

Romans; I Corinthians; II Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philip-
pians; Colossians; I Thessalonians; II Thessalonians

General Letter of Paul:

Hebrews

Pastoral Letters of Paul:

I Timothy; II Timothy; Titus; Philemon

Other Writings of John:

Revelation

(Paul wrote the following books while in prison: Ephesians, Philip-
pians, Colossians and Philemon.)

As stated before, when one adds the 22 books of the O.T. to the 27 books of the N.T., a total of 49 books results—representing absolute completion. Out of envy, the Jews of the second century altered the number of their books to 24 (as explained earlier) in order to erase this significance.

But the true Scriptures remain intact even though the order of the O.T. has been rearranged primarily by the Roman Catholic Church,

following the order of the corrupt Septuagint version. Then they simply rearranged the N.T., as well.

The Church of God can maintain purity of doctrine since God has guaranteed that all the Scripture has been preserved. This is most foundational and vital for those who seek God's truth!

Part 3: The Apocrypha and Other Uncanonized Documents

The Roman Catholics contend that they are the exclusive preservers of the Bible, with the authority to determine which books should be in the O.T. or N.T., and the order in which they are to be placed. They also acknowledge that they have exercised due authority by adding the seven books of the Apocrypha and portions of three others to the O.T.

Some Catholic translations contain the following books, called the Apocrypha: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and I and II Maccabees.

Besides these books, one portion is inserted in the middle of Daniel 3, titled, "Song of the Three Holy Children." At the end of Daniel is an added chapter (13) called "Susana and the Elders." Then is chapter 14, called "Bel and the Dragon."

The word *Apocrypha* comes from the Greek and means "hidden" or "secret in origin." In English, synonyms for *apocryphal* include words such as "unauthentic" and "ungenuine." The very name of these books verifies their lack of authenticity!

The Apocryphal writings come from a mysterious beginning with a secret origin. With this in mind, notice the following comments in regard to the sharp contrast between the canonized Scriptures and apocryphal writings:

"Christianity as it springs from its Founder had no secret or esoteric teaching. It was essentially the revelation or manifestation of the truth of God." The Apocryphal writings are further defined as "inconsistent elements existing side by side with the essential truths of Christianity" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit., Vol. 2, p. 176).

Actually, there are *hundreds* of other apocryphal writings, such as the "Gospel According to the Egyptians," "Gospel of the Birth of Mary," "The Apocalypse of the Virgin," and on and on.

Most all the oldest known versions of apocryphal writing differ from each other. It is very rare to find any two that are identical.

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100, many apocryphal writings appeared among the Essene Jews. One of the most notorious of these spurious documents was the book of Enoch.

It should be noted that Jude 14 does *not* mention this book, but rather is quoting a prophecy by Enoch handed down by God's servants from before the time of Noah.

The document called the Book of Enoch made an attempt to discredit God's Sacred Calendar in the first century. It was summarily rejected by Jude and all the other apostles.

Another interesting fact pertaining to the book of Enoch is that *even the Catholics reject it!* In spite of such a questionable track record, some continue to wonder whether such apocryphal works might be inspired, as were the canonized Scriptures. The best solution to this issue is to ask: Did Christ and the apostles ever recognize them or quote from any books of the Apocrypha? Did they ever show any approval of them?

To answer this, there are 263 direct quotations of the O.T. found in the N.T. Beside this, there are 370 statements found in the N.T. which are references to passages in the O.T. In both the O.T. and N.T., there are *no quotes* and *no allusions* to any of the writings of the Apocrypha!

It is well documented that the Essene Jews originated many apocryphal writings. It would be beneficial to learn more about the nature of the beliefs of these Jews.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* informs us: "The Essenes were an exclusive society, distinguished from the rest of the Jewish nation in Palestine by an organization peculiar to themselves... They had fixed rules... and regulations for the conduct of their daily life even in its minutest details.

"Their membership could only be recruited from the outside world, as marriage and... [all association] with women were absolutely renounced... the tenets of the society were kept a profound secret, it is perfectly clear from the concurrent testimony of Philo and Josephus that they cultivated a kind of speculation, which not only accounts for their spiritual asceticism, but indicates a *great deviation from the normal development of Judaism, and a profound sympathy with Greek philosophy, and probably also with Oriental ideas* [emphasis ours]" (11th edit., Vol. 9, p. 779).

It is also interesting that this same article continues on the subject of the Essenes: "Their office-bearers were elected" (ibid., p. 780).

Remember that I Timothy 4:1-3 categorizes forbidding to marry with doctrines of demons. The Essenes resorted to the fabrication of fictitious documents to justify the many doctrines of demons they adopted.

The Record of History

The Apocrypha is traced from the Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church after the fifth century. From there, it was traced back to the Septuagint and on to Alexandrian influences—originating from a mixture of hybrid sources such as Samaritan and Essene writings.

The more devout Jews of the Dispersion accepted no other canon than the very Scriptures accepted by the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea. The following quote illustrates the exalted position of the canonized Scriptures even outside the area of Judea.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria (Egypt) explained why he “makes no quotations from the Apocrypha, and he gives not the slightest ground for the supposition that the Jews of Alexandria of his time were disposed to accept any of the books of the Apocrypha in their Canon of ‘Holy Scripture’” (*Philo in Holy Scripture*, Ryle, p. 33).

The law portion of the Greek Septuagint version of Alexandria (Egypt) was translated from the Samaritan Pentateuch rather than the official Jewish Version. This can be categorically proven by the existence of 2,000 places where the Septuagint disagrees with the official Jewish Version, but agrees perfectly with the Samaritan Pentateuch.

The Jews used in translating the Septuagint were “Samaritan Jews.” As late as the early A.D. 300s, the Apocrypha was not yet added to the Septuagint. These apocryphal writings were later added to the Septuagint version, which was already corrupted before these unwarranted additions.

In the fourth century (300s A.D.), at the Council of Laodicea, the Apocrypha was still excluded from the Scriptures (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit., Vol. 16, p. 189).

In the year A.D. 384, renowned Roman Catholic scholar, Jerome, began translating the Latin Vulgate. He made his translation directly from the Hebrew (*ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 881). This translation from the Hebrew excluded the Apocrypha, as Jerome had rejected it as being false.

Shortly afterward, at the Council of Carthage, Augustine, the Canaanite Bishop from Hippo, North Africa, led the way for the approval of the seven Apocryphal books. This was the first official “acceptance” of these questionable writings still rejected by many Roman Catholic scholars.

It was not until the Council of Trent (1563) that the Roman Catholics declared the Apocrypha to be “equal” with any of the books of the Bible. The Catholics intended to alienate the Protestants with this ruling and did so by declaring anyone who rejected the Apocrypha to be “anathema of Christ.”

Lost Books of the Bible?

There are a few other books that some have questioned as being “lost books of the Bible” simply because they are quoted once or twice. Remember that, in Acts 17:28, Paul quoted heathen poets.

Certainly, no one claims that heathen poets were a missing part of the scriptures, but the logic that some employ is equally without basis. Paul quoted certain religionists who condemned Cretians as always being liars in Titus 1:12-13. This does not mean he sanctioned that statement along with anything else they may have said as worthy of being canonized.

The following are some of the so-called “lost books” of the Old Testament:

- Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14)
- Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13; II Sam. 1:18)
- Book of the Acts of Solomon (I Kgs. 11:41)
- Book of Nathan the Prophet (I Chron. 29:29)
- Book of Gad the Seer (I Chron. 29:29)
- Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (II Chron. 9:29)
- Visions of Iddo the Seer (II Chron. 9:29)

Note that the last 4 books listed were quoted in the books that Ezra canonized. Why did he not add these books to the canon? The answer is that God did not authorize him to do so.

When writers compile information in order to complete part of a bigger picture, every source that contributes any given part of the big picture may not be relevant in its entirety. Even though each of the sources may be completely reliable and accurate, they may not be a part of the bigger picture that God is guiding the writer or prophet to communicate.

During the time that Samuel conducted his “company of the prophets,” part of the students’ duties would have had to include the recording of events and compiling of accounts from sources written previously.

Many isolated accounts were combined into a unified bigger picture in documenting the flow of historical events. This would have applied to Elijah as he conducted the schools of the prophets at a later point in time. God allowed such servants to document not only the history in general, but also many accounts in which God dealt with individuals, kings and entire nations.

When servants such as Isaiah or Ezra later canonized the accounts into larger works, they mainly compiled other existing works into a larger unified flow of history. So these servants and prophets actually built upon the labor of previous servants.

Some of the books listed above could have been drafts that God caused to exist for later servants to be able to contribute to the bigger picture. This being the case, God would only cause the *final* product to be canonized, not every draft in the stages of development.

Those who question the ability of God to preserve the Hebrew Scriptures or the Greek New Testament fail to realize that this is something that He has carefully engineered and brought to pass. Only those who stand in awe of God’s power to preserve His Word will avoid being washed away in a sea of doubt.

After having proven all things (I Thes. 5:21), including God’s ability to preserve the *complete* Bible, we are able to confidently trust God when He makes an unequivocal promise.

Almighty God plainly states, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35). We must all grow to the point that we can take God at His word—and believe Him!

But we must also be sure that when we are studying the books, chapters and verses of the Bible they are in fact the *words of God*, and not something less...

SECTION IV

Which Translations Are Best?

The Bible as we know it today has been passed down through the centuries. Referenced only briefly earlier, over the past few years, there has come an explosion of different translations and “specialty” Bibles. Some of these can be helpful. Others are inaccurate, and some pitifully so. How can you be sure which one to use? Which is the most accurate?

God commands His servants to “seek you first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33), and to “search the Scriptures [the Bible] daily” (Acts 17:11). But how can this be done if the Bible has not been translated into the language of the “common people”? This section explains which of the over 70 English translations produced today you should use.

The introduction of the *King James* (KJV) or *Authorized Version* (AV) of the Bible states, “But how shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept closed in an unknown tongue?...Translation it is that opens the window, to let in the light; that breaks the shell, that we may eat the kernel.”

The word “bible” conjures up mystery in some people’s minds. From the Greek *biblos*, it simply means “a sheet or scroll of writing; book.”

The languages in which the Bible was originally written are primarily Hebrew, for the Old Testament (with a few exceptions in Dan-

iel and Ezra), and Greek in the New Testament. If a person is not able to read Hebrew and/or Greek, then he must rely on reading a translated version in his own language or vernacular. Of course, no Bible translation is 100% accurate. There will be errors, based on the meaning of certain words, phrases, idioms and each individual's preconceived ideas. God could have directly sent men who could have translated the Bible into the language of the people. But God has tested the Bible "scholars" of this world to see how careful and diligent they would be in keeping His Word accurate.

Dead Sea Scrolls Offer Proof

We learned the Old Testament was preserved by the Jews, who were one of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were entrusted (Rom. 3:1-2) to carry down, from generation to generation—by precisely copying and meticulously preserving—the entire text of the Old Testament. The Jews took this responsibility so seriously that, as they were making copies, they counted the words and letters to make sure nothing was added or omitted. This text is known as the "Masoretic Text." Without doubt, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 proves the accuracy of the Old Testament scriptures we have today. The climate around the Dead Sea is quite arid and perfect for preserving materials such as the scrolls.

These scrolls include complete books and portions of books written 2,000 years ago. One well-preserved scroll of the Book of Isaiah was written in "square letter" Hebrew, which dates it to the second century B.C. This single document alone put to rest the speculation that Isaiah was written after the time of Christ—thus proving correct the prophecies of Jesus.

Most of the scrolls were written between 100 B.C. and A.D. 68, and most likely hidden just before the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

When these newly-discovered scrolls were translated and then compared to our modern King James Bible, they harmonized completely. The only significant differences are those of spelling. We cannot be surprised at this, because, even in our lifetime, certain words have undergone changes in spelling. For instance, "subtil" to "subtle" and "centre" to "center."

Dr. Yigael Yadin, an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, once said, "What is astonishing is that despite their antiquity and the fact that

the scrolls belong to this pre-standardization period, they are, on the whole, almost identical with the Masoretic Text known to us. This establishes a basic principle for all future research on texts of the Bible. Not even the hundreds of slight variations established in the texts, affecting mainly spelling and occasionally word substitution, can alter that fact.”

Professor Miller Burrows of Yale University states, “The conspicuous difference in spelling and grammatical forms between the [Isaiah Scroll] and the Masoretic Text, makes their substantial agreement in the words of the text all the more remarkable.”

The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls allows us to travel back 1,000 years earlier than the oldest previously known manuscripts. They provide for us PROOF that the Old Testament, as we have it, is accurate and reliable.

Catholic Translations

In the first three centuries, the Catholic Church used the oldest available fragments of the New Testament. These are called the “Western Text.” They are full of notable corruptions, contradictions, deletions and counterfeit additions. They vary so much that there is no way of accurately knowing what constitutes the New Testament. Scholars admit that they originated in Rome.

Catholics and Protestants agree that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but disagree on *which* books belong in the Bible. The Catholic Old Testament canon includes books such as Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and I and II Maccabees, with added sections in Esther and Daniel that are missing in the KJV. These added books are referred to as the “Apocrypha” and are not accepted as scripture by Protestants and others. Among scholars, it is common knowledge that there are obvious historical inaccuracies in the books of Tobias and Judith.

The Codex Vaticanus just happened to be found in the Vatican Library in 1481. The quality of the text is amazingly intact. But it leaves out a substantial amount of text. For instance, Genesis 1:1 through 46:28 is missing, as well as Psalms 106 through 138, Paul’s Pastoral Epistles, Hebrews 9:14 through 13:25, and the entire book of Revelation. In the gospels alone there are 748 whole sentences, 452 clauses and 237 words missing. Codex Vaticanus has all the books of the Catholic Old Testament except for I and II Maccabees.

The Codex Sinaiticus was discovered in A.D. 1844 by Prof. Tishendorf on a trash pile outside the walls of St. Catherine's Monastery, at the base of what some believe is the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments. It had been thrown out as garbage by monks. On nearly every page there are corrections and revisions by as many as ten different people. It contains most of the New Testament plus the "Epistle of Barnabas" and "Shepherd of Hermes." Codex Sinaiticus lacks II Maccabees, but includes IV Maccabees.

The Greek Septuagint was translated during the Hellenistic era (331 B.C. to A.D. 100), to benefit Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, who spoke Greek. About 250 B.C., the first five books of the Bible were translated by 72 Hellenist Jews. The name *Septuagint* comes from the Greek phrase "of the seventy." A few decades later, the books of the Prophets were translated as well. This is where the Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus originated.

Codex Alexandrinus has all of the books of the Catholic Old Testament, plus III and IV Maccabees.

The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament has many corruptions and should not be used.

The text of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) has been the work of so-called higher critics over the past 150 years. They base their work on both the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. But they originated in Egypt in the fourth century A.D., through the work of schools and critics in the early centuries after Christ. Together, these texts are also known as the "Alexandrian Text." Some think they should rely on the oldest text available. This text has about 5% of the known Greek manuscripts and has been altered over the years. The fact that it is the oldest manuscript does not make it accurate. As a copy of the text wore out, a new copy was made—written by hand. This explains why there are few old copies. Each was disposed of and destroyed as a newer one replaced it. Critics seem to forget that accurate copies of the original are far superior to corrupt copies, no matter how old they are.

The King James Version

When King James commissioned a group of 57 scholars to translate the Bible in 1607, he looked for the best men at that time to produce a new translation using only the original Hebrew (Masoretic Text) and Greek (Byzantine/Received/AntiochianText) manuscripts.

These men were divided into six groups: Three for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament, and one for the Apocrypha (later dropped). When each group finished its work, they submitted it to another group of twelve men for review. This next group found it necessary to add certain words not found in the original in order for the text to flow in the English language. These added words are in italics so that anyone reading will be able to tell which words were added. The initial job was finished in two years, but an additional nine months was taken for yet another group to evaluate the work of the first groups. Since it was first published in 1611, only minor modifications (mostly spelling) have been made.

The *King James Version* uses the “Byzantine Text” (also known as the “Syrian” “Antiochian” and “Received” texts) for its main manuscript of the New Testament. This text circulated throughout the Byzantine Empire. It also circulated in Syria and in its capital, Antioch. Scholars often call it *Koine* (Greek: “common”) to designate its 95% accuracy.

There are some small differences among the almost 5,000 Greek manuscripts that we use to compare. But most of these differences do not change the *intent* or *meaning* of the verses.

We saw the Bible is inspired by God in such a way that we cannot base doctrine on any *one* verse. Doctrine or teaching is not found nicely wrapped up in one place. Again, “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10).

The actual differences in manuscripts involve words or phrases that do not change the intent of the verse. By putting all the verses together on any particular subject, you can come to a sound decision on what the verses’ intent is.

Questions of Authority

There are only two places in the New Testament that come into question about authenticity: Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11.

The last part of Mark’s gospel is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, but it *is* found in some copies. The language used is somewhat different than that of the rest of the book, leading some to believe that someone other than Mark actually finished this section. But if these last verses are left out, the chapter does not come to a logical ending. Because God does things decently and in order (I

Cor. 14:40), these verses *do* belong; they were inspired by God to be there.

Referring to John 7:53-8:11, the margin notes in the *New King James Version* (NKJV) state, “NU brackets 7:53 through 8:11 as not in the original text. They are present in over 900 manuscripts of John.” Again, this section does not take away nor add anything that would change the intent of the book. In fact, a theologian once said, “the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity.”

Addressed in the body of the book, one deliberate hoax that was perpetrated after the New Testament was completed is found in I John 5:7-8: “For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree as one.*” Transcribers who believed in the pagan Trinity concept added the italicized words to support their beliefs.

Those who use this verse to support the Trinity doctrine are either ignorant of the verse being altered, or are blatantly trying to deceive. Nowhere does the Bible teach the pagan doctrine of the Trinity. Although this verse is found in the KJV and the NKJV, there is a marginal note in the NKJV stating, “NU, M omit the rest of v. 7 and through *on earth* of v. 8, a passage found in Greek in only four or five very late mss.”

The *Critical and Experimental Commentary* says of this section that the verse was not found in the Latin Vulgate until the eighth century. *Adam Clarke's Commentary* states, “But it is likely that this verse is not genuine. It is wanting in every MS. Of this epistle written before the invention of printing, one excepted, the Codex Montifortii, in Trinity College, Dublin: the others which omit this verse amount to one hundred and twelve.

“It is wanting in both the *Syriac*, all the *Arabic*, *Ethiopic*, the *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Armenian*, *Slavonian*, etc., in a word, in all the ancient versions but the *Vulgate*; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct MSS. have it not. It is wanting also in all the ancient Greek fathers; and in most even of the Latin.”

Translation Problems

When one language is translated into another, certain problems arise. Even under the best conditions, translations produce inaccuracies,

because there is no exact correspondence between languages in syntax and vocabulary.

Even though there are a few phrases that are disputed in the Greek, we can still understand its vocabulary, idiom and grammar much better than we did 150 years ago.

This is not always the case with Hebrew. Because it is a much older language and the Israelites lost much of the knowledge of certain aspects, two different translations by two different people will wind up with two different renderings of a particular passage. Vowels did not originally exist in the ancient Hebrew, but were invented in approximately A.D. 700 to help unify Hebrew pronunciation. Thus, the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton “YHWH” (“LORD” in the Old Testament) is constantly disputed. People will not even attempt to say the word, out of fear of mispronouncing God’s name.

Realize that the meanings of certain passages in the Hebrew are still subject to interpretation. Additional research and new discoveries will assist in solving some of the difficulties of the ancient Hebrew language. But until then, we cannot criticize a translator when he has done his best with the knowledge he has.

Due to peculiarities of Hebrew grammar, some verbs are often uncertain. Translators faced difficult obstacles. Hebrew verbs in perfect tense can be translated as present, simple past or present perfect. The word *ahabti* can be translated “I love,” “I loved,” or “I have loved.” *Yadati* can be translated “I know,” “I knew,” or “I have known.”

Hebrew words in imperfect tense can be translated as imperfect, present or future. *Yiktob* can be translated as “he is writing,” “he writes,” “or he will write.”

The RSV translates Isaiah 42:6 as, “I have taken you by the hand and kept you,” whereas the KJV translates it “...and will hold thine hand, and keep thee.”

Also, certain idioms in one language are not understood in another. To “kick the bucket” in the United States usually means “to die.” But to say “kick the bucket” in a foreign tongue may mean to literally “kick a bucket”!

Types of Translations

There are two basic types of translations: (1) *literal*, in which translators use the original manuscripts to interpret word for word; (2) *free interpretation*, in which translators render meaning by meaning.

The KJV and the NKJV (*Revised Authorized Version*) are both literal translations. They follow the Greek and Hebrew text word for word wherever possible. But where the English idiom does not correspond with the original text, the words often come out sounding cumbersome and not understandable.

The KJV often sounds odd because it uses 17th-century language. People then generally knew whether a speaker was talking to one person or many. This is preserved in Classical English. If a speaker were addressing one individual, he would use “thee” or “thou.” If he were addressing a group of people, he would say, “you” or “your.” The NKJV has replaced “thee” and “thou” with the more modern “you” and “your.”

Some other literal translations are the *American Standard Version*, the *Revised Version*, the *King James II Bible* by Jay P. Green; *The Holy Bible in Modern English* by Ferrar Fenton; *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Robert Young and the *Jewish Publication Society* translation of 1917.

Most of the newest Bible versions use the second method of translating, describing the meaning of each passage. First, a translator tries to understand what the verse is saying. Then he attempts to convey this message to the reader using *his own way* of explaining what the verse means. If the translator has little or no knowledge, or a wrong understanding, of a particular verse, he does a great disservice to the reader. This is one way in which an individual's own ideas are promoted. For example, go back to the I John 5:7-8 issue, where those who believed in the Trinity tried to palm off their own ideas.

A translator may also need to add words or phrases in order to convey his message or translate other words into a more modern usage (for example, “feet” instead of “cubits”).

Some examples of free translations are *Today's English Version*, *The New English Bible*, *The Bible, A New Translation* (Moffatt) and *New International Version* (NIV). The *English Standard Version* and the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (New Testament; full Bible due in 2004) both appeared in 2001.

As a matter of fact, the NIV has been revised yet again. It is called *Today's New International Version*. This newest of the new translations is gender neutral. “Sons of God” becomes “children of God,” in Matthew 5:9, and “a man is justified by faith” becomes “a person is justified by faith” in Romans 3:28.

Working to preserve gender specific language, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood said, “This is incredibly serious to evangelicals, how the Bible is translated... We believe the Bible is the word of God, so changing these things deliberately is dangerous.”

By comparing both types of translations, most people can learn more about the Bible and its teachings. The literal translation will take you back to the thought process of the original, while the free translation is thought to help one feel closer to the times by saying things in a more modern way. For instance, shekels, minas and talents turn to pennies, nickels and dollars.

As a general rule, a translation produced by just one man will tend to be slanted toward that man’s ideas.

A translation by a committee or team of scholars will be more moderate or conservative. Sometimes though, a compromise will take place in order to please all. If this happens, then the original thought may be lost altogether.

Everyone should have at least one good study Bible. Despite some inaccuracies of the *King James* Bible, we recommend it as your primary study Bible, not only because it is one of the most accurate, but because many study tools, such as *Strong’s Concordance*, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* and others, are based on the KJV. The numbering system that these study aids use makes it easier to cross-reference and study the meaning of certain words.

Remember, no Bible translation is 100% accurate. But when God opens a person’s mind to His understanding, that person will always strive to divide truth from error.

But this means you must “study” the Bible—“rightly divide the Word of truth”—to be “approved unto God” (II Tim. 2:15)...

SECTION V

“Study to Show Yourself Approved”

The Word of God is a “quick” (living, spiritual) Book (Heb. 4:12). But, seeing no purpose, some have no *interest* in studying its contents. Do you understand the value of Bible study? How can you establish a pattern and stick to it? What kind of things should you study? The book’s final section will teach you why you should study the Bible!

We have seen that the Bible is the inspired Word of God—His written Instruction Book to mankind. It answers every important question in life. It explains HOW TO LIVE—and reveals the road to salvation.

Then why do so few know HOW to study the Bible?

First, we must ask, why study the Bible? II Timothy 2:15 admonishes, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The apostle Paul tells us that proper Bible study leads to approval from God. The same verse also speaks of other benefits. First, as workmen, we need not be ashamed—if we study God’s Word. Instead, studying becomes fulfilling and satisfying. You have done what God expects you to do—an acceptable type of self-approval.

Rightly dividing the Scriptures—knowing the Bible, inside and out—takes a lifetime. God’s Holy Spirit opens one’s mind to this spiritual understanding (Psa. 119:18; John 16:13). True biblical knowledge and understanding come from diligent effort and God’s Spirit working in you.

God expects us to familiarize ourselves with His Word. Only by fully appreciating it will we act on it. Christ said, "...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, quoted from Deut. 8:3). Psalms 119:105 affirms: "Your *word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

And as Paul admonished Timothy: "And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15). He continues in verses 16-17: "*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction in righteousness*: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Taking in the Word of God for *spiritual* nourishment surpasses the need of taking in *physical* food. The Bible provides light to avoid pitfalls in the path of life. The Bible gives us wisdom to understand the weighty aspects of salvation. All Scripture is inspired by God to mold and teach His people so that they may become perfect and equipped "for good work of *every kind*" (Moffatt translation).

Bible study is a vital process that does more than teach us.

Ephesians 5:25-26 reveals the washing or cleansing effect that comes from Bible study: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water *by the word*."

This is echoed in Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

The analogy of water washing the body is not to be confused with the water of baptism. The water of baptism is not what washes us clean. (Upon repentance, the blood of Christ cleanses one of past sins.) In this case, water symbolizes burial of the individual being baptized. The "watery grave" typifies the death of the old self and the emergence of a new person with a new life.

By contrast, Bible study washes the individual. This is our part of the cleansing process—God expects us to do *our* part. This process takes place as one internalizes God's Word. This leads to the desire to repent and grow in godly character. God's Spirit *is* instrumental in this cleansing process. But diligent Bible study is the means to ourselves being washed and cleansed.

Bible study has many benefits. Therefore, one should establish goals in undertaking this vital spiritual activity.

There are many kinds of goals within Bible study. They basically fall into three categories: short-term, medium-term and long-term. Establishing this thinking in your mind makes goals much more obtainable, as well as interesting. Each of these categories will be listed below with suggested examples.

It should be understood that one could work on more than just one goal at any given time by alternating Bible study sessions, or splitting each session.

The Seven Keys to Understanding the Bible

The Church of God has long been responsible for teaching seven keys to understanding the Bible. Although these keys are general overviews, they are indeed vital in being able to understand the Bible's true doctrines.

The true gospel: The kingdom of God will be set up on this physical earth for a thousand years—the millennium—in the near future.

Salvation is creation: The process of salvation involves the development of godly character in those who are called and who overcome.

Duality: The method of duality runs through every phase of God's plan, such as: the physical creation and the spiritual creation; the first Adam and the second Adam; the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. In prophecy, duality indicates the “type” and the “anti-type.” This means the former fulfillment as opposed to the later, climactic, major fulfillment of prophecy.

God's Holy Days: These are the seven annual Sabbaths that spell out the plan of salvation. God has commanded their observance forever. He forbids the observance of pagan holidays.

The truth about Israel: This involves the true identity of the lost tribes of Israel and their importance in the world today, including the identity of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh as inheritors of the birthright promises. It also includes knowing the identity and location of the other tribes of Israel. Without this knowledge, prophecy cannot be understood.

The Bible interprets its own symbols: Referenced earlier, man cannot understand the meaning of biblical symbols because he in-

jects his own speculation. Let the Bible explain the meaning. Like parables, these symbols are often used to hide the meaning rather than to make them clearer.

God's Sabbath: The seventh-day Sabbath is the test commandment that professing Christianity refuses to obey. This is the identifying sign of Israel and of God's people.

Short-term Goals

As you examine the following objectives, keep in mind that they are not listed in any particular order.

It is best to begin with short-term goals. For example, read a short book of the Bible, such as James or Ruth. Consider the timing, such as near a Holy Day that pertains to a certain book. You might choose a specific book because it puts a crisis or particular interest into better perspective.

Study a chapter of the Bible. The reasons listed above could apply here, as well as to certain goals listed below.

Study a small subject in the Bible. A good example of this could be: "Why kneel during prayer?"

Study the background of a particular book. This could include the time and circumstances in which the book was written.

Study a difficult scripture.

Here are some tips to keep in mind while studying:

Many kinds of subjects can be studied. Some examples would be the wearing of jewelry or the subject of hair length. Other examples could be astrology or tattoos.

Make it as interesting as possible, but keep it simple. Bible study aids, such as atlases and history books, may help stimulate interest and promote additional curiosity.

When selecting a topic, give it some forethought. Index cards are useful for listing ideas that come to mind when studying other topics. Ironically, many avoid studying the Bible because they feel overwhelmed. Keeping Bible study simple makes it easier to tackle these subjects.

Do not study the Bible haphazardly. Some open their Bible and study whatever pages their eyes see first. This is *not* the way to approach God's Word.

God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He expects us to follow an organized approach to His Word.

Medium-term Goals

These are projects that might extend a few days, weeks, or months. It is possible to pursue short- and medium-term goals at the same time. It is also possible to alternate between the two.

Read a larger book of the Bible, such as Isaiah, Psalms or Proverbs.

Study a specific doctrine. This could be assisted by certain Bible helps such as concordances or topical bibles.

For example, one could study the doctrine of tithing in detail. If faced with a physical affliction, you may want to study healing.

Memorize a series of key scriptures. Realize that some people such as the Pharisees were required to memorize the Torah—the first five books of the law. Others have memorized the entire Bible, yet do not understand it. When one memorizes key scriptures, the purpose should never be to recite them to impress others, but to internalize the scriptures and apply them in your life.

Review sermon notes and look up the key scriptures. Also review your margin notes. Some may need correcting and updating!

You will find that the more you study the Bible, the more you will *want* to study the Bible!

Long-term Goals

A common long-term goal is to read the entire Bible. If you have never done this, challenge yourself to do so at your earliest convenience. The benefits are enormous!

A thorough reading of the Bible may take as little as six months. If one references commentaries and other supportive material, it may take as long as two years. This gives an overall foundational understanding, which can be built upon in the future.

Here is one tip for someone accepting the challenge to “read the Book.” Before beginning the project, you may wish to read our series *The Story of The Bible*. It helps to provide a basic understanding of Old Testament events and the Plan of God.

Read all the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Read a selected “harmony of the gospels”—another excellent project.

Make notations in your Bible. See Section I “The Twelve Rules of Effective Bible Study” for a number of helpful hints on marking your Bible. If you have recently purchased a new Bible, try to transfer all your old Bible notes to it.

Re-read all RCG literature, using the Bible to reference each scripture.

Remember, the value of undertaking these projects and goals is to instill the habit and desire to study God’s Word.

Bible Helps

There are many useful Bible helps available, with more all the time. While some may be too expensive to purchase, you may be able to access them at your local library or via the Internet. This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives one an idea of the wide variety of invaluable helps that one could reference.

However, keep in mind that the authors may have injected their own wrong ideas and misconceptions. But overall, these references are useful tools.

While helpful, recognize that these do not represent an “officially sanctioned” list of perfect or near-perfect study aids.

Unger’s Bible Dictionary: A very thorough one-volume Bible dictionary, which is practical and reasonably priced. Unger’s now has their Bible dictionary on CD for those with computers.

The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: While very expensive, this five-volume set is probably the best Bible dictionary money can buy. You might find it in larger municipal and university libraries. It is well worth exploring.

Manners and Customs of the Bible (By James Freeman): This book discusses Bible personalities, as well as manners and customs of a given culture at a given time in history.

The Bible From 26 Translations: This large reference work shows every verse in the Bible from at least four or five translations.

The Amplified Bible: The King James Version with modern English updates.

The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown One-volume Commentary on the Bible: Although their full commentary covers six volumes, this JFB one-volume commentary is perhaps the most highly recommended of all *single*-volume editions.

Adam Clarke’s Commentary: Another six-volume set. This one is also well-known and widely used. This commentary also has a condensed single-volume version.

The Companion Bible: This Bible is filled with historical, scriptural and linguistic details.

Halley’s Bible Handbook: Compact, yet filled with valuable archaeological notes and other historical background information.

Angus Green Bible Handbook: Somewhat more thorough and expensive than Halley’s Bible Handbook.

Nave’s Topical Bible: This book is ideal for tracing references when no common terms are used. Some Bible software packages have *Nave’s Topical Bible* integrated into their software.

The Works of Flavius Josephus: An excellent historical reference, considered by many to be the most authoritative reference to supplement the Bible. The price is reasonable.

The Bible as History By (Werner Keller): An authoritative two-part history relating to the Bible.

Baker’s Bible Atlas: This helpful tool shows geographical locations and gives detailed explanations of the culture of ancient times. Many helpful photos and illustrations are given.

Oxford Bible Atlas: Similar to Baker’s Atlas and of equal quality, with differing emphasis.

These different sources provide a kaleidoscope of spectacular information. They make Bible study not just interesting, but exciting. The titles listed here are but a small sampling of what is available. There are also a variety of websites where one can purchase such references online. Many of these and other items can be purchased “used” at a fraction of the “new” price.

Certain websites specialize in used books—and that includes used Bible reference books. Also, many of these helps are available free of charge on the Internet.

Study the Bible Daily

Consider some of the great benefits of daily Bible Study: “For the word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

The Word of God is a living Book and “a discerner of thoughts.” It applies to all situations and should be looked to for daily guidance.

If studied correctly, the Bible will make you “wise unto salvation.” It imparts the wisdom to survive and grow while we continue in the proving ground of qualifying for the first resurrection.

The Scriptures help you to recognize and shun error. They help you to avoid the devil’s seduction.

When you study the Bible, God’s Spirit leads you into understanding more truth. This Spirit imparts spiritual understanding of Scripture and helps you to apply these principles in daily life.

You build faith by studying the many examples of God’s faithful servants (Rom. 10:17).

Study of the Bible is central to Christians being “vigilant” and able to “resist” (I Pet. 5:8-9) the “wiles” (Eph. 6:11) and “devices” (II Cor. 2:11) of the devil.

Study for comfort. You can gain serenity, stability and peace of mind through Bible study: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort* of the Scriptures might have *hope*” (Rom. 15:4).

In making time for study, different people have employed different strategies. Some set aside time early in the morning. This is ideal if circumstances allow the flexibility to do this. Others set aside time later at night—a practice that works for some, but not everyone.

In order for study to be beneficial, you must remain alert.

Try to study at a time when you can concentrate without distraction. Set aside a period of solid time if possible—not just a few minutes here and a few minutes there. Although an ideal situation might not exist immediately, actively plan and strive to make arrangements for better conditions in which to study the Bible. This is vital!

A Matter of Life and Death

Failing to study your Bible—or doing it incorrectly or without purpose—will lead to doubt, discouragement, emptiness, negativity, anxiety, unhappiness and a feeling that God is not with you. Prayer is talking to God. To diligently read your Bible is to listen to what God is saying to you—and to do so any time you want to hear His voice.

Make Bible study a major priority. It is a matter of life and death.

Finally, consider this vital passage: “If you abide in Me, and *My words* abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you” (Jn. 15:7).

Perhaps the greatest goal is to abide in Christ, with His Word abiding in you. Answered prayer becomes one of the many benefits of attaining the overall spiritual goal—walking with Christ and living the Book. This is an immediate reward within itself, although it leads to the ultimate goal of eternal life. Bible study is instrumental in getting the Christian there.

Although it may seem that time is at a premium and most never have enough, make diligent effort to properly study the Bible daily, while using the same diligent effort to remember the twelve rules of Bible study.

Eternal life is worth it!

Other Books by David C. Pack

- The Awesome Potential of Man
- Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!
- The Bible's Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out
- Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?
- America and Britain in Prophecy
- The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity
- Sex – Its Unknown Dimension
- Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!
- Dating and Courtship – God's Way
- Train Your Children God's Way
- The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?
- The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross”
or Required for Salvation?
- Herbert W. Armstrong – His Life in Proper Perspective

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